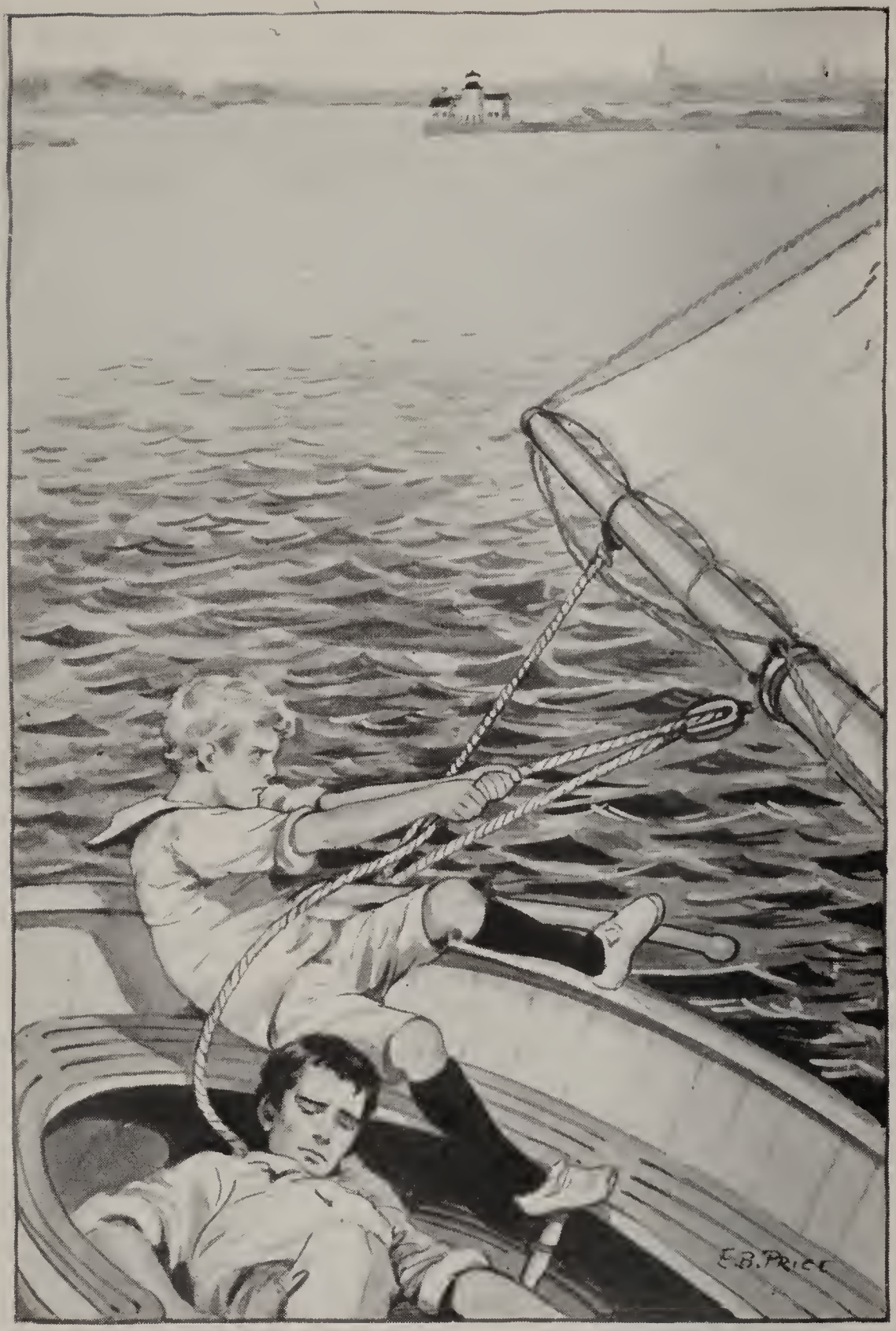
GARTH,
ABLE SEAMAN



He jibed the *Ailouros* again

GARTH, ABLE SEAMAN

BY

EDITH BALLINGER PRICE

Author of "Silver Shoal Light," "The Fortune of the Indies," "The Happy Venture," "Blue Magic," etc.

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GARTH, ABLE SEAMAN

SHIP OF DREAMS

There never grew the tall oak
That fashioned her stately beam,
Save in the forest of faerie,
Under the hills of dream.

Her sails are spun of phosphor,
Weft of the Pleiads' shine,
And she gleams like a mountain of moonlight
From her truck to her water-line.

But only one may see her,
And only one may know
The thrill of her perfect answer,
When the scented trade-winds blow.

Under the high poop lantern,
Silent I see him stand,
With his steady eyes on the sea-line
And the wheel beneath his hand.

And over the tilt of her moon-sail
There hangs one mystic star,
Pointing her down to the waters
Where the Wonderful Islands are.

GARTH, ABLE SEAMAN

CHAPTER I

SCHOOL AND SYMPHONIES

GARTH PEMBERLEY tossed his head back and slid one finger between his Eton collar and his chin. The first action removed every vestige of a side-parting from his curly, bronze-colored hair; the insertion of the finger somewhat relieved the persistent scrape of the Eton collar. The collar was a new dignity, and an uncomfortable one. As far back as Garth could remember he had worn blue sailor jumpers that left his tanned throat open to the sea wind and the salt fog. This white linen atrocity was something quite outside his experience. But clothes which are altogether suitable when worn at a lighthouse on a rock are not permissible for a lower school boy at St. Hubert's. A far greater dignity than the collar was the "St.H." in a gold shield which Garth was entitled to wear upon his cap, and

it was necessary that the rest of his clothes should be in keeping with that.

Though his geography book lay open before him, Garth did not look at it. His mind had slipped away from his surroundings, until the roar of New York outside the school-room windows became the crash of breakers on the Reef; he could almost hear the gulls crying above Silver Shoal. He saw it much more clearly than the row of desks before him—Silver Shoal Light, which had been his home for all that he could remember of his eight and a half years. The white, squarely built house clinging to the gray rock, the creeping foam about the ledge, the *Ailouros*—their own dear cat-boat—swinging at her moorings off the pier. He bent quickly over the geography book, for the new dignity forbade tears—and the *Ailouros* had been sold.

The lesson was concerned with the ports of the Atlantic coast, but the book had opened of its own accord at a review list of names—magic names that were sufficient to set Garth off upon an entirely new train of thought. Callao, Mozambique, Taltal, Bilbao, Iquique, Rio de Oro. These were names he had heard time and again, ports to which he had voyaged in

fancy commanding a fair-sailed barkantine. The stories his father had told him, the tales in the books his father had written, were full of these names and others as fascinating. He could almost remember some of the earliest of the stories—those that his father had narrated as they lay side by side on the lighthouse landing, when Garth was still too weak to sit up. (The crutches at his side spoke the effect of that devastating illness even now.) Tales of ships, they all had been—tall ships, full-rigged, and with fair canvas spread to the trades. Sailing-vessels, always, yet his father was at that very moment aboard a steamship: Lieutenant J. E. Pemberley, third in command of Destroyer *026*. Garth felt in his pocket and drew out a thin, foreign envelope. The geography book shielded his action, as geography books have done since time immemorial. He spread the sheet before him on the desk and read it slowly for the twentieth time. It was in his father's swift, clear hand, and bore no date—the first letter since he went to sea:

? Somewhere-in-the-middle-of-the-sea ?
? Some time A. D. ?

My dearest Pem:

I got your letter, and Mudder's, just before we

lost touch with the world, and they lie before me now as I write. I am writing in the ward-room because it 's cold, and I have a piece of toast in my port hand. Thus I am accomplishing two things at once, and they are both things I want to do. I am detailed to the bridge in fifteen minutes so this won't be a very long letter. I wonder if you 'd like to be beside me up there—all hooded in by a steel roof; the Captain staring out through a loophole; a sailor repeating his orders through to the engine-room; seas crashing up over the nose of the destroyer, and the thrum-thrum of the big turbines filling everything. You *would* like it, I think, old blue-water sailor though you are. I suppose you 'll write back, "No, never, never! I want wind whistling through the shrouds, and the foreto'gallant slatting itself to pieces in a nor'easter!" But this is a different sort of exciting. Not so beautiful, perhaps, but just as thrilling. Especially when you know that there are —that *perhaps* there are—submarines waiting for you out there in the night. We 've had one or two adventures already which I must n't write about, but they were very interesting.

Your old friend the *Billington* turns out to be our mother-ship. Remember how you and Joan—*Aunt* Joan I suppose I ought to say—spied at her signals with the glass for hours? . . . I had to stop to go on duty then, but now I 'll add just a word before I turn in—it's two o'clock in the morning! It was nice on deck. Not a glimmer of light except from the stars, which shone like blue points. Far off there was

just the faintest gleam from the coast, and a dim trail of paler darkness behind us from the churning foam of our wake. In the wireless-room blue sparks were sputtering as urgent orders for us came in from space. We 're off, somewhere, and I don't know when I shall post this. I wonder how it goes at St. Hubert's. I 'm glad I was spared the sorrow of seeing you in civilian clothes. I 'd rather think of you in good salty blue denim. Don't forget to draw the plans of a boat for me once in a while,—and most of all, don't forget your poor old

FOGGER.

The new dignity had also forbidden the use of such childish names as "Fogger" and "Mudder." Other lower school youths talked of "Dad"; so Garth spoke also of "Dad" as convincingly as he could. But "Fogger" it remained in Garth's thoughts of him, changelessly. The thoughts were very frequent. He could remember the departure now with a steady lip. How very tall Fogger had looked, and how different in his new uniform with gold on the cuff and a foul anchor and bars on the collar! He had caught Garth up in his arms till his own tawny head was on a level with Garth's face. And the very last word he had whispered was, "Remember!"

Garth had not been quite sure, at that heart-

breaking moment, what it was that he was to remember, but later he knew well enough. He was not to forget some of the things Fogger had said on that day when Garth first learned that they could not stay at the lighthouse forever.

"You want to be a sea-captain, and you can't be; but you can help me to be one." "I shall be on the bridge of a destroyer; your quarter-deck will be a room in town." "There are other things just as fine as being a sea-captain; things that take just as much grit. Are you going to show me that you have it?"

Garth remembered exactly how the room had looked—Fogger and Mudder's room at the lighthouse, with the afternoon sunshine pouring in across its smooth old floor through the deep windows. He applied himself in earnest to the Atlantic seaports, but the letters blurred and danced. Unfortunately for his studying, also, the margin of the page was decorated by a picture of a square-rigged ship, drawn in pencil. It was a much better drawing than might be imagined, considering the age of the artist, but Garth was not satisfied with the set of the maintopgallantsail. He changed it carefully, and also added a highly ornamental pennant at the main truck, in red pencil. This was all

so absorbing that he went to his class still dreaming, and when a distant voice suddenly remarked:

"Pemberley, you may name the principal Atlantic seaports from Maine to New Jersey," he answered, without rising:

"Taltal, Iquique, and Callao."

The master kept him, later, for an explanation.

"I was thinking about those other ports," Garth told him, "because you see you 're apt to touch there in the coastwise trade—sir."

The "sir" was always an afterthought. The master did not seem entirely satisfied with the explanation, but when Garth recited a correct list of Atlantic ports, concluding with a smile of irresistible quality, he shook his head and said:

"Dismissed, Pemberley."

Garth put on the cap with "St.H." on the peak, and buttoned his reefer tightly against the December wind. Out in the stone court before St. Hubert's a crowd of boys lingered; knots of tall upper school youths exchanging notes on gymnasium proceedings; lower school small fry—some of the littlest being escorted home by mothers or governesses. Garth came

down the steps, looking expectantly toward the street. The crutches had ceased to attract notice, and he passed almost unobserved between his school-fellows. A lanky fifth form boy, who had, for some reason, taken it upon himself to champion Garth, clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, so long, till after the hols," he said, and Garth realized for the first time that school was breaking up for the Christmas vacation. A vista of happy, idle mornings, and long evenings in which to design boats, opened out before him entrancingly.

At the great iron gates waited a figure with face half buried in a muff.

"Joan!" Garth cried to her in surprise as he swung down the step, for he had expected his mother.

He could never remember to call her *Aunt* Joan. When you have taken in a person, homeless for the moment, lived with her for months in the close quarters of a lighthouse, adored her and called her by her first name—then if she suddenly goes and marries your uncle, how can you possibly remember that she 's your aunt?

She flung out an arm to sweep him into her embrace, then stopped short—possibly at sight of the Eton collar. Despite the past three

months she could not grow used to these "shore clothes." His face was so unchanged, even to the mellow tan which New York winter had failed to lessen, the gray eyes that always reminded her of the sea were so exactly the same as before, that she could never become accustomed to seeing him without a background of wind-swept sky and flying spray.

"Did you know I 'm through with school until—oh, until next year?" he said, as they walked to Fifth Avenue.

"To be sure, it will be another year, won't it?" she agreed. "But indeed I knew that vacation had begun. That 's why we 're celebrating."

"What?" begged Garth. "I don't think you 're a nice aunt, not to tell me."

Any chance of her telling him was cut off by the necessity of hailing a bus.

"Can't we go on top?" Garth pleaded.

"In the middle of December!" Joan exclaimed with a shiver. "Oh, well, now I think of it, we 've such a little way to go that I dare say it won't permanently freeze us."

The ascent of Fifth Avenue bus stairs is something of an acrobatic feat, even for people with what Garth called "good sea-legs."

The conductor solved it for him by carrying him bodily to the top, despite the imposing "St.H." Established in the front seat, Garth demanded:

"What did you mean by its being such a little way? All the way from here up Riverside and home is awfully far."

"We 're not going home," Joan explained. "We 're going to drop off in a minute and have a bite at one of these Tea Cozy or Toasted Crumpet places along here. I have tickets for the symphony this afternoon."

A city full of people and a gold shield on the cap are very hampering things. They prevented Garth, for instance, from flinging his arms about his aunt and shouting aloud his appreciation of her plans. The top of a bus is such a very exposed spot. Suppose that a sixth form St. Hubertian should be coming out of a side street! Garth found one of Joan's hands inside her muff, however, and squeezed it very hard. The muff was, he discovered, much warmer than the surrounding atmosphere of Fifth Avenue, and so he left his hand there and Joan held it tightly.

The great concert-hall was filling gradually as they entered it. Their seats were in the

front row of the balcony; Garth planted his elbows on the broad rail, dropped his chin in his hands, and gazed at the stage. It was his first concert—his first real music, for until now he had heard nothing but his father's swinging sea-songs, and later Joan's fitful melodies on the studio piano. He could never have imagined that so many people could make music all together. In little groups the musicians were straggling in, some carrying violins, some bearing great horns that glittered. The double-basses which leaned at the back of the stage like great unwieldy creatures (elephant violins, thought Garth) were being claimed by their players, who tested the strings with little muffled pluckings. One man bent over the big copper kettledrums, tweaking first one and then another small handle, laying his ear close to the drumheads as if to catch a whispered secret. All the instruments were playing soft little tunes to themselves—runs and trills and snatches of melody; Garth wondered how they could all play at once, possibly. But they stopped, suddenly, as a ripple of applause announced the entrance of the conductor. He raised a little stick in his hand; it clicked sharply as he tapped it against his music-desk.

Then—oh, wonderful!—four notes, tremendous and beautiful; the impressive opening phrase of the Fifth Symphony, striking sternly across the dying rustle of programs.

Joan had played parts of it often to Garth on the piano and had tried to explain to him a little of its meaning—the struggle of the soul against Fate, and its final triumph. He had understood more of her explanation than she imagined, and had fashioned for himself a quaint little philosophy from it. The music poured about him like a great wind. The violins wailed, the flutes leaped an octave higher; then the great triumphal burst, courage and conquest. Garth raised his head feeling—somewhat bewildered—rather as if Fogger had said to him, "Remember!"

But there was something as wonderful still to hear. Joan indicated upon the program, "The Sea and Sindbad's Ship." That great, mournful, desolate theme! It had all that was beautiful in the storm at Silver Shoal, all that was noble in the shout of the wind around the tower. "The Ship goes to pieces on a Rock surmounted by the Bronze Statue of a Horseman." There was the ship, struggling, tossing, fainter, fainter; and nothing then but the

sea, ancient, tragic, beautiful, beating on an age-old crag.

Garth's face was hidden on his arm. He dared not open his eyes, for he knew that in reality a brightly lit concert-hall lay about him and not the awful splendor of the sea. He wanted, for a moment more, to think that he stood with Fogger on the gallery of Silver Shoal Light, a wild wind in his hair and on his face. He said nothing at all until he and Joan were more than half-way home inside a bus. Then he remarked, suddenly:

"Joan, I 'm going to play one of those violins, and make the music that was about the sea."

CHAPTER II

ENTER CELIA

GARTH was extremely glad to be out of school. It was a very good school, and he was greatly interested in many of the things he studied there, particularly geography, which informed you of distant lands, and mathematics—which Fogger said you had to know through and through if you wanted to build ships. But Garth had passed all that he could remember of his life in an offshore lighthouse with two sensible and understanding grown people. The clamorous mob at St. Hubert's lay as entirely outside his experience as though he had been a mer-child.

The day of his arrival—school had been open for several weeks—he wore an English sailor-suit and addressed the headmaster in engagingly confidential tones whenever the fancy struck him. Add to this the crutches and the glint of steel at his ankle beneath the long trousers of the English sailor-suit, and the sum

total was enough to set him apart at once as decidedly out of the way. St. Hubert's stared but it did not snicker, and in a short time he had won a distinction all his own. When the lower school discovered—as it very soon did—that he had lived until two weeks before at a lighthouse, he became more sought after than he had any desire for. His real knowledge of ships and their ways made even a few upper school youths exchange tolerant words with him. The fact that his father—besides having kept the lighthouse—wrote books that were printed, and was now a lieutenant in the navy "and going to be an admiral soon," as his son put it, all accrued in Garth's favor. The favor rather abashed him, for he was not used in the least to blowing his own horn nor to having it blown for him. St. Hubert's accepted him finally as a decided asset, and gave him friendly hints as to school ways in general.

Yes, St. Hubert's, as a whole, was friendly, but its general knowledge of things nautical was appallingly slender. And there were too many boys, quite too many for anything. Why, Garth decided, he might as well live on Bird Rock, in the middle of a whole flotilla of gabbling herring-gulls. So that he looked forward

to the holidays for many reasons. If Fogger were only at home it would be perfect. Uncle Rob Sinclair, nice as he was, could n't be like Fogger.

Uncle Rob's studio was by far the biggest room in the apartment. The other rooms clustered around it like little barnacles on an oyster-shell. It was full of unexpected and delightful corners where a person could sprawl unseen to read or draw boats. And there was such material for boat drawing, too! Uncle Rob was most prodigal with his ends of sketch-blocks and good pencils. He even permitted attempts at oil-painting, but these were so ghastly to behold that their perpetrator gave up this branch of art and returned to dividers and drawing-board.

But on this second evening of the holidays Garth was not designing nor measuring. For Joan had come to sit between the candles and play "The Volga Boat Song," and that was enough to make Garth forget half-breadth plans and live for a time in an heroic world dimly lit by the candle-light upon his aunt's hair. The light shone also, though he did not know it, upon his own hair and into his earnest eyes. His mother knew it, and put down her work to gaze

at him and to wonder at the look that was so much like Jim's, and yet so wholly his own.

Robert Sinclair, who had laid aside his brushes when the candles were brought in, sat in a dim corner smoking a long pipe. In the absence of Fogger's utterly satisfying arm, Uncle Rob's was not bad, and thither Garth went to curl into the clasp of it. He was not sure that Uncle Rob understood about things, quite, and yet he had painted the Ship of Dreams; he must understand. For that was the ship that Garth would never command, the stately silver-sailed square-rigger that filled his heart. And Uncle Rob had painted her just as she should be, looming along out of a gray mist, and he had given the picture to Garth on his birthday, last summer, before they left Silver Shoal. So he must understand, a little. And now, when Garth shivered—a small ecstatic thrill—as the song of the Volga boatmen rolled somberly, there was a quick responding pressure of Uncle Rob's arm.

Garth watched the coal in the long pipe fade and glow, a little detached star near his uncle's lap. He stared at a candle flame till it blurred into a multicolored nimbus floating in the twilight; stared till it became the calm flooding

beam of Silver Shoal Light, pointing down the seas. The chords boomed more resonantly, now faintlier. They were the wave voices against the rock below his window—were they? A distant voice said:

"No, is he really asleep, Rob? Poor old man! I 'm rather glad school 's over with for a bit."

Christmas came and went—an exciting episode for Garth of hitherto unknown experiences. The fishing-village of Quimpaug had not offered many holiday attractions. A modestly decked little juniper-tree, cut on the mainland, had always stood in the corner of the Silver Shoal living-room, its tiny candle flames reflected in the black pane. It had meant a sober, happy time, with the Christmas star to look at above the near star of the Light, and a candle set in the eastward window to guide the Christ-child if He should chance to fare by sea.

But here were glittering gay rows of lighted shops, and rushing crowds, holly-sprigged; all the gaudy panoply of New York on holiday, tempered that year in its selfishness by the needs of the wounded and the cry of the orphans overseas. But it was a gay enough city, and

Garth marveled at it. There was, too, splendid solemn singing in the great half-finished cathedral, and afterward merriment in the studio, and many gifts, and this time the Christmas star above the blue star of the service-flag at the window.

It was after the holidays that Celia Hampton first appeared to the Sinclair-Pemberley household. She materialized in Robert Sinclair's portrait class at the Three Arts League with the beginning of the new term. She interested him because her work was sincere and delicate; she herself was delicate, also, but he was not so sure of her sincerity. She puzzled him, too, somewhat. Better bred than the Bohemians, more earnest than the society dilettanti, she filled a unique place in a class which had begun to bore him a little before Christmas. And she was charming to look upon.

"I 'd like her intensity more," Sinclair told his family, in describing her, "if I did n't feel that all the while she knows she 's being intense. But her work 's too good to be sacrificed to her affectations."

That was why he wasted more sound anger upon her than on the rest of his class and then rebuked himself because she was too polite to

glare like the Bohemians and too sensible to weep like the dabblers. Indeed, he sometimes wondered if his anger reached her at all, and if her soul did not sit quite undisturbed within walls of its own building.

Joan met her for the first time at the Winter Academy, where two of Rob's portraits were hung on the line. She looked wistful and friendless, somehow—her fragile beauty was of the type that holds an appeal—and Joan asked her to tea on the spot. She came, of a January dusk, bewitching in velvet and sealskin, her cheeks stung into unusual color by a savage wind. She was early, and Garth happened to be the only person in the studio to receive her. Taken by surprise, he hastily put down his book, and rose—not very easily—from the window-seat on which he had been curled up. Celia marked the crutches, all at once, and looked at him swiftly.

"Everybody ought to be here in a minute," he apologized.

"You 're Garth," she said. "I 've seen a picture of you at the Academy. Your father *does* paint well."

"My uncle," Garth corrected her. The idea

of Fogger's painting pictures amused him inwardly.

"Oh, yes?" she said, as though it really did not matter much. She threw back her wraps and rustled lightly down beside him.

"May one see the book?" She picked it up from the cushion and glanced at the cover. It was not quite what she might have expected, being entitled, "The Sailing-Ship; Its Development and Perfection." She looked at him again.

"Do you like to read about ships?"

It was quite evident that this was her first meeting with Garth!

"Oh, yes!" he said quickly.

She turned the pages idly, and, putting the book down, clasped small gloved hands about her knee.

"Only fancy," she mused, "I 've never seen the ocean."

Her slight laughter rippled out, quite as though this was not an astounding and terrible thing she was telling him. Garth stared at her, thoroughly amazed.

"Never—seen the sea!" he gasped.

"Unless one could count New York Harbor

and the Hudson,'' she reflected. ''They 're salt, I believe.''

''Oh, *no,*'' Garth said gravely, ''they would n't do! Oh, I 'm sorry.''

''Is it so dreadful?'' she asked, laughing again. ''Somebody—others have said so, too. But I thought I 'd been quite a fortunate person—let me see; the Grand Cañon, and Banff, and the Canadian Rockies, and—'' she ticked them off on her fingers—''I 've seen all those.''

''But those would n't do,'' Garth protested; ''not at *all!*''

''No, really?'' she said. ''But then, I live in Cleveland when I 'm at home, and that 's on the edge of a tremendously big lake. One can't see the other shore, possibly. And there are huge waves.''

But Garth shook his head decidedly over her case.

''You know the other shore 's there,'' he said, ''and that it 's just more America. And it 's fresh water. It could n't have had any adventures.''

Celia determined that she might as well begin to play this game in earnest and champion her great inland water.

''What about the battle of Lake Erie,'' she

asked, "and what 's-his-name Perry saying, 'We have met the enemy and they are ours,' and all that sort of thing?"

Garth was somewhat taken aback. He had to admit that this might well be ranked as an adventure after his own heart. But how could it tip the balance against the sea's immemorial history, the half of it untold?

"When you see it," he said, "perhaps you 'll know the difference. I don't think I could ever *tell* you."

Celia was interested enough to wonder if it was something in her own attitude which made it so impossible for him to explain the sea to her, or whether it was merely too large a subject for a small boy to tackle. But her curiosity was brief. Joan came in hurriedly with Sinclair, and the talk above the tea-table swept from art to the theater and overseas and back again. Garth found his place in the book and, comfortably consuming a sponge-cake, went on reading. Sometimes he looked over the page at Miss Hampton, whose eyes were sparkling as she talked of somebody or other's warm palette in a way they had not when she talked of the sea.

"I see quite what you mean about her," Joan

said to her husband at dinner. "I think that she 's experimented so long that she 's forgotten her real self—and now she 's lost the way back to her own character."

"Very neatly put," Rob said. "I 'm trying to show her the way in her work, at least."

"I like her," Elspeth Pemberley remarked.

"But think!" Garth said solemnly, all at once; "she 's never seen the sea. Only she called it the ocean."

"Do you think that 's what 's the matter with her?" his uncle asked.

Garth nodded decisively.

"What 's the difference between the sea and the ocean?" Rob pursued. "Your tone was scornful."

Garth looked at him rather pityingly.

"The ocean 's what you read about in geography books," he explained, "and the sea—the sea—"

"I perceive what you mean, I think," said his uncle, as Garth sought words. "Thanks. I 'll not make Miss Hampton's mistake, now. I want to stay in your good graces."

CHAPTER III

CELIA IS UNIMPRESSED

GARTH had not forgotten the symphony concert, nor had Joan forgotten his subsequent remark. So it happened that among the Christmas presents was a half-size violin.

"If you were in earnest about wanting to make the music that was like the sea," Joan had said, "here 's your chance to prove it. The fiddle is my present; Uncle Rob's will be lessons, if you 'll work."

Garth's mother, perhaps, would not have added the last condition. For though he was part dreamer, Garth was more than half craftsman, and what he wanted to do he toiled at conscientiously—witness his elaborate and really careful boat plans. So that his new year began with diligent scrapings, and he was in no way discouraged that his quavering scales did not remotely suggest the notes of the concert violinist.

"He 'll never startle the musical world," said

his teacher, "but he 'll get lots of fun out of it himself."

That, to be sure, was exactly why Joan had bought the violin. She continued to love Garth so dearly that anything which would give him lots of fun she wanted him to have. Elspeth, who loved him even more dearly, did not always follow this principle.

Miss Hampton came to the studio frequently. She was living in a furnished room in the Fifties—all for the sake of Art—and a real open fire, and a piano, and furniture that was everything but golden oak, rejoiced and refreshed her. She had few friends in New York, and of them she liked best these new ones, who were sufficiently unconventional to be amusing and puzzling enough to be interesting. Each time that Celia mentally deplored the strange and simple fashioning of Elspeth's gowns, she found something in the blue eyes above them that made her pause and ponder. And Garth gave her much cause for wonderment, for she began to find that he was not to be so lightly treated as she had at first imagined. Small boys of eight and a half she had previously classed together in one impartial category. She had a certain fund of re-

marks supposedly suited to them, upon which she drew at random; indeed, a good deal of Celia's conversation with every one was arranged on this principle. A great many of the remarks—dealing largely with sports—she found obviously ruled out. This left her more or less in the position of listener, and when she found that she could not always understand what she heard, she became enough interested to open a window in the wall which Sinclair held she had built around herself, and listen with her mind as well as her ears.

She arrived at the studio late one afternoon with a sheaf of sketches for criticism. Garth was interlarding serious practice with slipping chromatic effects supposed to simulate wind. His mother, apparently not at all disturbed, was writing by the window. Joan and Rob were out. Elspeth apologized—her letter must catch the foreign mail—and left Celia's entertainment to her son. He put down the violin and plunged at once, as was his way, into the topic which had been last in his mind.

"It really sounds quite like that," he stated, "only there ought to be something at the same time to go *boom, boom,* when it goes into the corner of the tower."

Elspeth's hurrying pen paused. "I don't believe Miss Hampton knows what you 're talking about, Pem," she murmured.

"The wind," he explained, "at Silver Shoal. Nor'east."

"Really," Celia said, "I don't know which you think about most,—that lighthouse or your father."

The next instant she was sorry she had said it. She had forgotten that it was unwise to speak without thinking where Garth was concerned. He stiffened slightly.

"They 're almost the same thing," he said gravely.

Elspeth, at the desk, hastily transcribed the incident for the delectation of Jim in the North Sea.

"I thought the wholly new life might rub it off somewhat," she wrote on, "but not so. He 's interested in school, and fiddling, and town doings, mildly, but I believe he 's more obviously sea-struck here than when he had the sea to cool his fancies. And it is quite true that his thoughts of you and the Light are almost inseparable. He lost you both at so nearly the same time, of course. You write, 'Don't

let him turn into a landlubber.' Good gracious, there 's no fear! He 's becoming a monomaniac.''

Celia's mental wall was built unusually high and strong this afternoon. She had come to show sketches to Mr. Sinclair, and to discourse on vibration and envelopment, not to talk about the wind to a small boy. She was bored and somewhat sleepy.

''You 're a funny little boy,'' she said listlessly, and Elspeth cocked an ear for her son's reply.

Rather as she expected, there was none. But it was not usual for Garth to leave a point unargued nor a listener unconvinced.

''Heavens!'' scribbled his mother, ''he is finishing it off with the Sails of Argo—as one might turn to the Bible!'' and sealed her letter.

For Garth had indeed reached out and pulled from the bookcase a small green volume which bore his father's name on the title-page. He turned without hesitation to a leaf headed ''Seaward Windows,'' and thrust the book into Celia's lap, a brown finger urgently indicating what she was to read. She skimmed the page idly.

Oh, listen where you lie!
A ship's bell struck in the night,
The upward flash of a light—
What is it passing by?

Lean from the seaward room,
Open the pane and hark,
Blotting the starry dark
Her gray topgallants loom.

Under her counter a gleam
Swings silver and swift astern;
Jewels, her side lights burn;
She is gone—a half caught dream.

Silent she was, and tall;
Nothing there is of her now
But the dwindling light at her bow
And a fret of foam at our wall.

"That 's what you could see sailing under *our* windows," he said, as she turned the pages, "not—" his absent gaze sought the window beside him with distant scorn—"not—taxis."

Celia leaned back among her furs and yawned imperceptibly.

"Taxis are useful at times," she said. "But your father really must be rather clever, you know."

And then Elspeth, who was watching her,

saw come into her face a look of weariness and wonder and bitterness, unforeseen and wholly unexpected. Elspeth, amazed, had not known that the girl could feel anything so deeply as this that she was now feeling, whatever it was. Garth, who had not seen the leashed desperation that his mother had caught, and who resented the perfunctory dismissal of his father's talents with a phrase, was framing a sober reply.

Happily, at that moment, Sinclair came in, cold and apologetic; and Elspeth took it upon herself to order tea and to turn on lights by which Celia's sketches might be examined.

CHAPTER IV

A CONFESSION AND A DECISION

THAT was the winter, now half forgotten, when New York was a vibrant pattern of flags. They drooped and blazed and stirred in a shifting glory above Fifth Avenue, through the mist-hung reaches of that great street that was briefly known as "Avenue of the Allies." It was the winter of a hundred "drives," when every one's lapel glittered with badges of this and that committee, and pretty ladies in becoming head-dresses sold little flags on every corner for some cause. It was the tense winter when America had added her weight to the force that was pushing against the advance of a ruthless and relentless enemy. New York tingled with reflected excitement. It cheered itself hoarse when automobile-loads of "Diables Bleus" were seen flitting about the streets; it poured forth its money at the feet of a heroically draped lady who sang the "Marseillaise" on the steps of the Public Library; it erected

that mammoth bewilderment, the Hero Land Bazaar.

Joan took Garth to Hero Land, which thrilled him exceedingly and tired him very much. But, with his usual faculty for charming outsiders quite unwittingly into his service, he had always some willing henchman just at the moment when it became apparent that he could do no more himself. Thus, before the afternoon was out, a Kilty, a French sailor, and an immense Anzac had taken it upon themselves to carry Garth through their particular realm, and sometimes outside of it. He accepted what was really necessity quite simply, merely protesting gravely that he was afraid he was rather heavy. To this the Anzac, who was about six feet four in height, made no reply save a remote and sonorous chuckle. The French sailor, to the same protest, answered blithely, "Ah, mais non, non, mon brave!"

This was in the middle of a broad and wonderful stairway, where living peacocks and parrots stirred slumbrously in dimly lighted niches, and swart, turbaned Moors leaned on simitars to guard whatever might lie at the top of this magic stair.

"Like going into Aladdin's garden, per-

haps,'' Garth murmured, grasping the sailor ecstatically.

But it was only a silly tea-room at the top, after all, which, though it yielded pleasant lemonade, was a disappointment after its enchanted approach. Garth had longed to discuss with the French sailor things nautical in his experience, but, finding that each was hampered by a very slight knowledge of the other's language, he had to give up his wish. After some reflection, however, he did achieve the remark, ''Merci beaucoup, monsieur,'' at parting, which caused the sailor to cry, ''Ah, ha! C'est un p'tit français, eh?'' and to salute French fashion, palm out, which salute Garth returned in good Annapolis style.

Hero Land was sufficiently exhausting, even to the wholly able-bodied grown-up. Everything was exhausting that winter. Garth, if he had ever looked back upon it comprehensively, would have found one long impression of tiredness. An unflagging tiredness that pursued him at school, and at home, and made the shortest walk in the somber beautiful park a thing to be dreaded, and even intruded itself into the candle-lit hours of after-dinner music in the studio.

Elspeth, who was his mother, saw it and said nothing. Joan, who was only his aunt, said, "How fast he 's growing!" He was, truly, but that was not enough to make this dragging weariness that almost bordered on suffering. Even Celia could see it, and studied his face with an odd sort of pity, as if she were comparing something.

"He 's tired, and he wants his precious sea," she told his mother, as though that were new to Elspeth. "I 'm tired," murmured Celia, "and I want—"

"I wonder what you *do* want," Elspeth thought, as Celia left her sentence unfinished.

They were sitting in the studio, Elspeth marking six new handkerchiefs "G.P.," and Celia finishing a sketch. They were alone, for Rob was lecturing in Jersey, and Joan had gone out with her beloved nephew. All at once Celia laid down her brush, and, raising her paper, began tearing it systematically into shreds, slowly, with a sort of cold delight in the harsh, rending sounds. It had been a particularly good sketch, but she laughed as she tore it—and it was not a nice laugh. Elspeth said nothing, which perhaps disappointed Celia, who had unconsciously hoped to make an effect.

"Do you ever feel like doing such things?" she demanded, turning swiftly.

"Sometimes," said Elspeth, folding a handkerchief.

"Do you do them?" Celia pursued.

"No." Elspeth raised steady blue eyes from the work. "Why do you?"

Then, seeing suddenly a great gap in the wall of Celia's inner stronghold, and a crying need of speech, she put out her hand and said again, "Why?" in a wholly different tone.

"I 've found out about Celia," Elspeth told her sister-in-law that night.

Robert was still in Jersey, and they were nursing the last of a fire on the hearth and waiting for him.

"Which?" Joan asked. "I should say there was a deal to find out."

"Almost everything," Elspeth said.

"Clever one! And you do it without saying anything yourself."

"You speak as if from experience," Elspeth laughed.

"I do," Joan said, stirring the coals. "You knew all about me before I 'd been at Silver

Shoal two days, wretched, selfish, sophisticated creature that I was!''

''Come, come!'' her sister-in-law protested. ''I did see that you were frozen into the likeness of your intolerant city, and needed a little salt water and eel-grass and beach fire to thaw you out.''

''And Garth,'' said Joan.

''And Garth,'' agreed his mother.

''To think that I was actually rude to him—yes, I was!'' Joan sighed. ''I was horrid. But what about Celia?''

''It 's simply that she was in love, and her man 's dead—or as good as dead.''

''That 's enough to explain all sorts of things,'' Joan agreed. ''Poor little thing! Did she tell you it, flat?''

''Not quite so flat. His name is Wyeth Merriman, and he went over at once with the Foreign Legion. Nothing has been heard of him since last summer, and he 's listed as missing—which usually means dead, of course. He wanted to go in the navy, being fond of water things apparently, but I gather that she discouraged him, holding that the soldier's is the nobler career.''

"I should think she 'd feel some regrets, now," Joan interrupted.

"That goes without saying," Elspeth said. "I should judge that she 's a person who 's always more or less retreated within a bulwark of perfunctory manner, but she 's so far inside it now that I 'm inclined to think what we see is n't the real Celia Hampton at all. She 's really back there, going around in a miserable little circle of selfish self-reproach and unhappiness and never even looking out at a loophole —except sometimes through her pictures."

"I gather that she did more than look out at a loophole this afternoon," said Joan.

"Somewhat more," Elspeth confessed.

"You old dear!" Joan murmured.

"I merely listened intelligently," Elspeth explained.

"That," said her sister-in-law, "is a gift in itself."

Elspeth, at some sound Joan would never have heard, rose swiftly and left the room. Joan sat looking at the spent embers and thinking back along her acquaintance with Celia Hampton; wondering, too, how much of the little, piteous, half-regretted story Elspeth still kept locked behind her quiet eyes. Then she

turned, to catch the murmur of voices from Garth's room. So it was he Elspeth had heard. Joan was filled with a rush of sweet jealousy of her sister-in-law, whose ears were quicker than hers to catch his half-waking word, whose right it was to go to him before any other. Joan, who adored him, stretched out empty hands to the fire.

"Come home soon, my Rob," she whispered.

When Elspeth came back she stood at the mantel instead of sitting down, and pushed the half-dead coals together with her toe.

"I don't know what to do," she confessed. "He falls asleep when he ought to be awake, and wakes up when he ought to be asleep. I don't know whether it 's your horrid city—the saturated solution of gasolene you call air—or what. I wish, often and often, that we had n't had to give up Silver Shoal. Perhaps school 's too much; I 've a mind to stop that. I wish he would n't miss Jim so fearfully."

That was when Joan reminded Elspeth that he was growing very fast. Elspeth agreed.

"But it 's not all that. It 's mental and physical and psychological and everything. I suppose that when a nerve-center has suffered as much as his did when he was ill, the real strain

he 's been living under is bound to tell. We keep forgetting that he was raised on a rock like a baby herring-gull. Simply existing, in town, must be a tax on his energy—let alone school."

So it came about that Elspeth made up her mind to something she had been half putting off for months, and took her son to a specialist of note. They were a sober, clear-eyed pair who waited in the silent, inhospitable office.

"Like waiting for Dr. Stone, only no train-ride first," Garth said, with memories of those occasional hot trips to town in light-house days.

"Yes and no," thought his mother, somehow aware of decisive happenings impending.

The specialist was of the capable, violent, and terse variety. When the examination was over he slammed the door of the inner room on Garth and faced Elspeth alone.

"Don't know who 's handled the case for you," he said explosively, "but, professional fraternity aside, he 's a fool. I could have put the boy on his feet years ago. Never be *normal*—" he answered the rising gleam in Elspeth's face—"what do you expect? Get rid of the crutches, anyway. Always will have

trouble with that leg, but what do you *expect?*''

Elspeth had expected nothing like this, but said little. The surgeon wheeled to his secretary.

''Fix up my first open date for Mrs. Pemberton—Pemberley—what is it? I work at St. Luke's, madam. May second? Right.''

''But—'' said Elspeth.

''Did n't you expect me to operate, madam?'' said the specialist, opening his eyes wide behind his magnifying glasses. ''Of course, if you want to condemn him—'' Something in Elspeth's face made him cut the sentence short. ''Will that date suit you?'' he finished lamely.

''Perfectly,'' said Elspeth.

''Good day, then; telephone my secretary if you wish to make arrangements.'' He bowed slightly, but Elspeth lingered.

''If I may have my son, now, please?'' she said whimsically.

The surgeon turned, surprised and half frowning, and then burst into a laugh that belied his savagely nervous speech.

''Oh, surely!'' he cried. ''I don't *eat* little boys!''

He pushed open the door he had so summarily slammed. Elspeth straightened herself.

"Come on, Pem," she said; "we 'll be late for lunch."

"Fatten him up for me!" called the specialist after them.

"What for?" said Garth, in the elevator.

"Don't you know how the witch fattened Hansel?" his mother twinkled.

"She wanted to eat him," mused Garth; "but he stuck out little bones through the bars and she thought he was getting thinner. I don't *s'pose* he wants to eat me."

"He wants," said Elspeth, "to give you good sea-legs—better ones," she amended hastily.

The look he gave her flashed from, "Is it a joke?" to, "Don't fool me, Mudder!" in a second's space.

"Truly," she answered his unspoken question. "Truly, dear one."

That night Elspeth three times began a letter to her husband, and three times tore it to bits and dropped it slowly into the fire. She felt more keenly alone than at any time since he had gone to sea. Joan and Robert, when asked for advice, had said gaily, "Splendid! he 's one of the best, is n't he? Why hesitate?" and Rob had added, "Er—if it 's the

filthy lucre, you know—'' and she had silenced him with a swift little kiss.

But Garth was not their Garth. His mother put down her pen and fled now blindly to his little room to crouch beside his bed and stare blankly at this sudden grave decision to be made that had risen all in a moment. Was it decision at all? How could there be but one possible thought? What was she afraid of? There was no danger, really. Her arm crept cautiously over him; he stirred and snuggled into it. So much more of him to hold than when she had carried him, a frail helpless baby, to Silver Shoal! His cheek, smooth and warm and brown, lay close to hers. His quiet breathing faintly stirred the soft bands of her dark hair. Her eyes slipped past him to where the Ship of Dreams sailed above the bed, misty and magical. Beneath, his coat hung over a chair, the abhorred Eton collar awry, the necktie dangling haphazard. The crutches leaned against the back of the chair, battered and somehow trustworthy-looking.

Garth's mother hid her face in the pillow.

"Jim!" she whispered unsteadily, to reach the North Sea. "Jim—oh, Jim!"

CHAPTER V

BEING A CHAPTER OF LETTERS

PART OF A LETTER FROM ELSPETH PEMBERLEY TO LIEUTENANT J. E. PEMBERLEY:

. . . So I thought I would n't write anything at all about it until it was over, because you might n't have got the second letter for a long time, and then you 'd have worried. I almost thought of cabling, but we decided it would be foolish, because there was really no danger. He was quite fine—did n't want me to stay, because he saw I dreaded it, but of course I did stay. He held my hand while he was going under the ether, and went at it conscientiously with no backing and filling at all. He had to go under twice because the thing is very complicated—quite terrifying and incomprehensible to me—muscle-grafting and so forth. The surgeon is an awesome being but tremendously competent and quite honest. Confesses that Garth will never be normal, and tells me frankly just how much improvement there 'll be.

The little room at St. Luke's is nice, and Joan has filled it full of flowers. Just at first he was too much hurt to care about anything, but now he 's over the worst part and being frightfully bored by having to lie still. Not that he could do anything else

if he tried, but he thinks he could. It will be a long pull, much longer than he has any idea of—several months before he 's on his feet. He is quite incorrigible, and reads such things as the Pilot Guide to New York Harbor and its Approaches, by preference. I suppose when he can sit up he 'll draw boats innumerable—and until he can, Rob does it for him. Very funny ones which send them both into shouts of laughter. He has n't forgotten how to laugh—and by the way, he said "Fogger" first of all, when he came to.

PART OF ANOTHER LETTER FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME:

. . . You can't be missing us half as much as we miss you; and good gracious, what experiences you 're having! Even the annoyingly veiled hints that the censor allows set us all a-tingle. Garth has laid out hypothetical courses for you all over the Irish Sea, where he thinks you now are, and invents all manner of manœuvers. The number of subs he has made you sink is quite appalling—I should think von Tirpitz would be tearing out his ornamental beard by the handful in his despair. Oh, Jim, he is being quite splendid (*not* Tirpitz!) because it *is* a hard pull. He is enthusiastically interested in everything, and when you see he 's beginning to be tired and you ask him if it hurts, he looks you in the eye and says, "What do you mean?" He has lost a good deal of tan, which you 'll regret, but otherwise he 's unchanged —unless it is that he looks more like you than ever,

quite wonderful. Do you remember the year before we went to Silver Shoal, when we thought he never would walk at all again? This bedside is so different, with promise ahead! And *he* was very different, poor frightened baby that he was. He asked for the Lullaby of the Little Ship the other night—do you remember?—and I sang it, and he went to sleep with one hand in mine and the other curled up under his chin, just the way he used to. Was n't it long ago! Or was it yesterday? Looking at him, I felt uncertain.

Bob is doing a remarkably clever half-length of Joan, and he has been making a lot of good things of Garth—little ones. G. P. would n't let me send you one, because he said it looked too flat.

"Wait till I get sitting up like a person," says he, "and then Uncle Rob can do one for Fogger, but those ones are flatter 'n a flounder!

A LETTER FROM G. PEMBERLEY TO LIEUTENANT J. E. PEMBERLEY:

Dearest Fogger:

I 'm in sick bay as probly mudder told you only this is the first time I could write being not alowed to sit up long enogh befor. Now it is going to be a good long one because none of my famly is here and I have lots of time. I 'm going to be a lot beter only not enough to be an able seaman yet. This is rather a bestly place in some respecs every body is extremly kind but do you know what I mean it is too montonus. Our famly isnt they are *very* nice.

Joan broght a wopping huge lot of dafadills which I never saw at Silver Shoal and Uncle Rob draws any amont of exiting pictures and mudder is here *all* the time and you know what she would do. But I wish you were here and could do some of the exitingest storeys. I made up some but they werent very good. There is a thing rather like a sawhorse, smaller, which is underneath the covers and keeps them off me so it dosnt hurt very much and any way I think about Bold Benbow. But he dident mind because he was waloping the enmy and saw chainshot flying all around but there is nothing out of my window except the top of the cathydrel with Saint Mikeal or somebody blowing on a horn. After a wile you want to see him do something else. Please write me a long, long one, very exiting about the Good Days if you arent alowed to tell what your doing. I supose you wont get this for ages and I wont get yours for ages but I'll *be* here for ages so it doesnt mater. Dont you think my spelling is improved? They are rather strick at Saint Hubert's and specily Mr. Harford. I went away before the end of the term and every body was very nice. Miss Ruthaferd, I don't know how to spell *that,* whose my nurse says I must stop which makes me anoyed because I wanted to make you a sheer plan of a good kind of schooner but perhaps I can later. Please dont be rolled out of your bunk and smashed when she tunes up. My bunk is awfuly stationery. Yours most respecfuly,

PEMBERLEY.

Please tell me *everything* because this place is not at all like a ship.

AN ANSWER TO THE ABOVE, SOME TIME LATER:

Ashore; somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

My very Dearest:

We are just in from a pretty strenuous trip, and here at the Base I find a lot of letters, each one more surprising than the one before it. Nothing so exciting has happened over here—for me. Can you know how glad I am it will all be so fine in the end, and how sorry I am it 's been so miserable just now? Mudder tells me a lot of things in her letters which you don't in yours, and I gather that you made rather heavy weather of it for a bit but did n't strike your colors. I liked your letter tremendously, writ out so neat, but I 'm sorry you did n't get the boat-plan in. Hospital may be monotonous (mark the spelling, man!) but I 'm afraid you would n't find our sick bay on board very comfy. We 're not often sick, but when we are they lash us in till we 're like horizontal papooses, perfectly tight, while the old packet does figure-eights all over the vasty deep. So it would n't be very nice for your poor old timbers.

Timbers remind me of Benbow; he was indeed full of spunk to lie on deck and command his ship even when his leg was carried off by chain-shot. You say he did n't mind because he was walloping the enemy —but don't you think that perhaps you 're walloping the enemy, too? All sorts of underhanded Hunnish enemies that I dare say you must be having to fight—

like Things-Hurting, and Lying-Awake, and Wanting-Mudder-When-She 's-Not-There, and—oh, well, you know 'em all. So keep on looking at St. Michael (or is it the Angel Gabriel?) and let him sound anything but Retreat on that bugle of his.

I 'm glad the family is nice, but they would be. Tell Uncle Rob to draw you a picture of a tidy little sloop-of-war being boarded by bad beastly buccaneers off the coasts of High Barbary. The pirates are climbing all over the place with cutlasses in their teeth, and the sloop captain is standing in the channels with a boarding-pike—very nasty—disposing of the buccaneer chief. One of the men is ramming grape-shot into the cannon in the waist, and a powder-monkey is running up with the charge. All this will give you and Uncle Rob—particularly Uncle Rob—a lot to do. He can put in as much else as he wants to; it might be a good idea to have a frigate standing in to help the sloop if she seems to be getting into too much trouble. I could describe a *real* thing that happened only a few days ago, but I 'd be put in the brig or worse if I breathed it, so we 'll have to wait until the war is over.

I see that you want me to write a long, exciting one, about the Good Days. This is quite long enough already, and it 's a good thing that several dozen sheets of this foreign paper take up no more room than one of ours. The Good Days seem very far away, here. I wonder what they 'd have thought of us—clipping along at 25 knots and rolling 50 degrees. Why were n't the stories you wrote good ones? I

wish you 'd send me some—also the new schooner plan. Also—tell me what comprises a complete transverse frame, what is a rider-plate, what are spur shoes, and how high above the hull should a ship carry her masthead light? There, sir, I expect correct answers to all these questions, and I am as strict (note spelling, please) as Mr. Harford.

Dear man, I think about you every minute—and if you feel something rather queer-shaped and quite salty on your pillow, it will be a lot of kisses. I took them to the radio man and he said he thought he could get them through, but he could n't guarantee what they 'd look like at the other end.

Yours—respectfully, forsooth!—Your own

FOGGER.

AN ANSWER TO THE LAST; STILL LATER:

Lt. J. E. Pemberley, S. G., Esq. K. C. B.??

DEAREST SIR: Question no. 1 A complete transverse frame comprises a floor-plate a beam a pillar and something else only what? 2. I don't know but I *think* timbers like half-beams only where? no. 3 Oh I got them mixed up. No. 2 is meant to be spur shoes. This is the rider-plate. A plate on top of the middle keelson. This is not fair because I hapaned to see it when I was looking up something. No. 4 Not less than 20 ft. above the hull depending on the bredth of the ship. And *that* isnt fair because its in the Pilot Guide. I can sit up all the time now in bed I mean and mudder and I are takeing up the studey of french. It is very intresting and here

goes for some—true ones not in the book. Ma lit et dans le chambe. Le chambe et dans le hopital. Mon pere et un matelot. Jaim lui beaucoup. Il sinkerai les soubmarins boches. I don't know any such word, questce que sais? Ma tante apportez un joli fleur a moi. We do it all the time dont you think its a good idea? Also Uncle Rob and I do mecanichal drawing he brought his drawing board that tips up on legs and goes over the bed. Joan cant do mecanichal drawing but she does lovely curlycues with the compases all colors. Oh their all *good* they dont do any of their own things at all. We are reading a trifically exiting book called twenty thousand leauges under the Sea but wouldnt the boshes laugh at Captain Nemo's submarine! I dont think its the same about me and Benbow. By the way Uncle Rob got stuck in the picture you told him to draw and made a near-to one of just some of the pirates and the sloop crew not quite so many ropes. Here is a poem I made today which I wish you would critasize. It sounds rather funny. Of course it isnt true what I see here but the gun means the sunset gun of course somewhere where there is one. The name of it is

: Sunset and Dusk :

The sun has set I hear the,
Thunder of the gun and roaring of the sea,
Stelthily creeps on the dusk and,
The changeing of the mingled sand,
Stops for night aproaches as,

Some dusky specter form that glides,
O're all the world and hides.
It from sight.

G. PEMBERLEY, June 1918.

Mudder didnt know what it meant about the sand but you do dont you? When the sun goes off it how it stops shimering and gets all gray all over? I will have to get some foreign paper too if I write such enormeous letters but I 'm suposed to be takeing a nap and nobody is here so I go on and on. Sure enough I got the kisses not much bent and now they live under the pillow to keep warm. Here comes my nurse I think and I supose she will put me in the Brig for not takeing the nap so goodby in a *hurry* your most terebly loveing son,

G. P.

CHAPTER VI

SICK-BAY

BUT it was not the nurse. While Garth was engaged in hastily fitting his letter into its envelope—a task involving much toil, as he had folded the paper crooked—there was a sound at the open door and a nice, low, rather dreamy voice said:

"Your room looks so jolly, all the flowers and everything, I could n't help stopping. Do you mind?"

Garth looked up. It was a young man in street clothes. Except that he was somewhat pale and quite thin, he did n't look like a patient. He seemed to have all his arms and legs, and he carried himself very squarely.

"Course not," said Garth. "Come on in."

The young man came on in and sat down. He said nothing for some time, while Garth refolded the letter.

"I 've been writing to my Fog—father," Garth announced finally, feeling the need of

starting the conversation. "He 's in the North Sea—or the Irish Sea, I 'm not sure."

"Indeed?" said the man. "I 'd like to be in the North Sea."

Garth kindled. Here was a proper spirit!

"My father is third in command of a destroyer," he said, "but he used to just sail our cat-boat."

The young man seemed to fathom the connection in this rather disjointed speech; he smiled appreciatively.

"You 'd rather have him sailing the cat-boat, perhaps," he said. Then—"Did you ever cruise?"

The calm and gentle way in which he took for granted a previous seafaring career so far as his listener was concerned intrigued Garth hugely.

"I never did," he said. "Oh, I always wanted to! Fogger never could get away from the Light, you see."

And then there followed a rapturous explanation—all about the Light, and the *Ailouros,* and Trasket Rock, and dear knows what else. There never was such a quietly enthusiastic hearer as this young man.

"And why are you here now, Bo'sun?"

His father's old term of affectionate address caught Garth suddenly—"amidships," Jim would have said. When he could, he explained why.

"I see," said the young man. He could say volumes in one word.

"Why are you?" Garth asked. "You don't look sick exactly."

"I 'm not—exactly. I was, I think."

"Were you in the war?" That was the obvious thing to ask young men in hospitals at that time.

"I think so," was the surprising answer.

"Don't you *know?*" said Garth, hitching himself higher on his pillow to stare at the young man. His friend encircled him with a strong and steady arm and made the pillow exactly right, before he replied.

"I 'm sure I was,—I think I 'm sure. Let 's talk about cruising some more. My name is John Loomis; did I tell you that?"

No, he had n't. Garth was glad to know the name. He had volunteered his own earlier in the conversation.

"I used to cruise," pursued Mr. Loomis, "a long time ago. Very long. Before the war, even. And once I prevailed on a schooner cap-

tain to take me on a coastwise voyage. I forget his name,—hers was the *Draco*. She was a nice schooner, three-masted. I used to sleep flat on the deck at night, with just the big black sails to see, and stars passing between them. Just cracks of stars."

Garth sighed. This was almost the kind of thing Fogger would tell. He put out his hand for the young man's. As he had written, St. Luke's was not at all like a ship. He wanted Mr. John Loomis to stay, and talk and talk about the *Draco*.

"Draco 's a constellation, too, is n't it?" Garth put in. "A long, winding one."

"A dragon, yes," said Mr. Loomis. "If you like ships, of course you like stars, too, don't you. You know Draco—coiling around below the Great Bear. And do you know the Ass's Colts that feed from the Silver Manger?"

No, Garth did n't. This was magic! Oh, why had not this young man come before, when the days had dragged even more slowly, filled with pain.

"No?" said Mr. Loomis. "Some people call it the Beehive but it is n't; it 's the Silver Manger." He looked swiftly from the window. "North—south. Would they let me come in

after dark? Then we could find it. They are hard to find, and easily frightened. Have you ever slept on the ground with only stars over you?"

"Once," said Garth, tingling with the memory of a night when he and Joan had been marooned on Trasket.

"It 's the best way to sleep," said Loomis. "I say—that—that 's beautiful!"

Garth followed his eyes to the Ship of Dreams, which had been transplanted to St. Luke's and hung at the foot of the bed. More explanations were in order. They were a bit confused by references to a square-rigger that had passed under the windows of Silver Shoal in the dawn, and so forth. But Loomis looked from the picture back to Garth, in his dreamy way.

"Your ship," he said. "I understand."

And Garth knew that he did.

"You must come to see me every day," he begged. "And don't forget the Ass's Colts! Oh dear!—No, I don't really mean oh dear—but I 'm going home next week. I sha'n't be able to walk or anything for ages still, but I 'm going away from this place. Won't they let you come to see me? Are you really sick?"

"I don't think I am," said the young man. "I should like to come to see you. Perhaps they 'll not let me, though."

"Oh, they must! Is n't it funny, somehow—"

Garth's spoken sentence trailed into silence as he followed out a thought.

"What is?" Loomis prompted.

"I was just thinking how funny it was, the way some people like things, and some people just *can't* understand how to."

"I suppose it would be quite a stupid world if every one liked the same things and did the same things," the young man said. "What, for instance?"

"I was thinking—how Fogger and I can't *help* liking the sea, and Mudder does because we do, and you like it, and Joan did n't at first, and Miss Celia Hampton *never* will."

"Poor lady!" said Loomis, "She is to be pitied, is n't she? Who is Miss Hampton?"

"She 's a painting young lady," Garth replied with faintest scorn.

"Face or landscape?" said the young man gravely, with a twitch of the lip.

"People," Garth answered in all seriousness,

"and my Uncle Rob is teaching her how."

The young man laughed and rose. "I 'll not forget Draco, and the Silver Manger," he said, "if they 'll let me come. I suppose I might come aboard by stealth, anyway. They don't post a guard over you at night, do they?"

"Not now," Garth answered.

"Right!" said Loomis. "A low whistle at the starboard gangway, then, at eight bells in the second dog-watch."

With which he was gone. Garth came back to realization of the plain white room and the unalterable confines of the high hospital bed, and found himself with the unaccountable feeling that it was his father who had just left him. Memories of Fogger mingled pleasantly with thoughts of Mr. Loomis and blurred drowsily in one comfortable current of drifting fancy. Twilight began to dim the white walls; the angel on top of the cathedral faded to a purple silhouette; the Ship of Dreams loomed larger, as she often did at dusk, and put aside the bounds of her frame. There was a humming of emerald water at her bow. . . . Miss Rutherford, coming in with Garth's supper, put the tray down very quietly.

"Seems half a shame to wake him up," she said to herself before she reached for the light-switch.

It was not too long a walk, from the apartment to the hospital. This afternoon Celia was with Elspeth. She had been to see Garth only once before, bearing three Gold of Ophir roses. This time she brought a coloured print of Old Ironsides, a well-meant offering which pleased Garth greatly. The first of the hot weather had seized New York, Robert Sinclair had thundered at her in class that morning, she felt herself altogether trampled upon by Fate, and she walked up Riverside now in a pale silence. Presently she forced herself to a remark, for Elspeth said nothing, but smiled dreamily.

"Garth is doing very well, is n't he?" Celia asked.

It was quite evident where Elspeth's thoughts had been wandering. She merely voiced aloud now what had been in her mind.

"Very well indeed. But I am so afraid that he has set his hopes too high—in spite of all my warnings. Because, even at best, he 'll never be able to do what he wants to do."

"And what does he want to do?" Celia asked listlessly.

That gave Elspeth pause. It seemed so strange that any one should have known Garth for several months without gathering that!

"Why, to follow the sea," Elspeth said.

"Don't most small boys of that age want to follow the sea, or be firemen, or something?" Celia asked.

"Most small boys," Elspeth answered, "know at least that they 'd be able. He knows he never can."

"That 's true," mused Celia. "But he never *says* anything about it. I mean, he does n't bewail his fate. Well, he would n't, with a mother like you."

In the look she flashed Elspeth lay the only confession she had ever made of an admiration that was growing to worship.

"No, he does n't bewail his fate, particularly," Elspeth agreed. "People can't, you know. It 's so miserable for themselves and everybody else."

"It 's better," Celia said, "to keep it inside and commune with it privately."

"Build a wall that shuts you in and every-

thing else out?'' Elspeth said reflectively. ''That 's not it; he does n't do that.''

''I was n't talking about Garth,'' Celia put in.

''Oh—I was,'' said Elspeth, who knew Celia was n't. ''He simply goes ahead as though he really were going to be a sea-captain. It 's a sort of grand 'let 's-pretend,' that 's all, involving the getting of all the fun there is out of everything.''

''I suppose some people have n't enough imagination to pretend,'' Celia said.

''Then that 's their misfortune,'' Elspeth replied gravely.

''I 'd no idea it meant so much to him,'' Celia presently said, disjointedly.

They said nothing more as they walked east, leaving behind them the new hazy green of the trees on Riverside, and passing the nave of the great half-built cathedral just breaking in marble buds through the ground. Elspeth was thinking of that first night in the hospital, a night of pain and half-consciousness, when her son had laid bare to her more than even she had known of what it meant to him. Celia walked in time to a staccato whisper—a silly, persistent beating that would not be gone.

"Let 's pretend that Wyeth Merriman is not dead . . . let 's pretend . . ."

"He *is* so nice," Garth told his mother and Celia.

He was concluding a graphic description of the visitation of John Loomis. Celia sat with her hands locked about her knees, gazing at him curiously and intently.

"He *did* come in at eight bells," Garth pursued, "and he had a marine-glass that you can see by night with. He knows as many stars as Fogger and Joan—more, I think, because he knows what their names are about, and long stories for each one. And, Mudder, he is n't sick exactly, but he has to stay here for a little while. Miss Rutherford told me about him. He was shell-shocked; they just found him walking around without any identification-disk or anything. They 've been sending him to lots of hospitals, till at last he got over here, but they can't find out if there are people he knows anywhere."

"What is his name?" asked Celia, suddenly.

"John Loomis."

"Oh," she sighed, and dropped her head.

"But he 's not going to stay here," Garth

went on. "He 's going to get a job on a ship. He told me so. He has n't any money, you see."

"I must run," Celia said, rising decidedly. "Garth, if you ever meet a man called Wyeth Merriman here—anywhere—tell me, please."

"What was the matter with her?" Garth asked his mother, gazing after her.

But her steps had scarcely died away before others sounded, and Loomis stood at the door. Elspeth had expected to see a hollow-eyed, broken figure of a man, not this tall straight youth, in whose face there was no sign of suffering, only a faint dreamy perplexity around the wide-set brown eyes. He smiled frankly, and said, a trifle wistfully:

"I see you 're being entertained already."

"It 's only Mother," Garth said. "I was telling her about the stars and all."

The young man shook hands very courteously. Elspeth liked his hand—long, and cool, and solid.

"I 'm awfully glad to have found a kindred spirit," he said. "We 've been surreptitiously star-gazing and spinning yarns."

"So I hear," Elspeth returned. "I 'm very grateful to you for filling some of these hospital

hours so magically. You 've probably found out what a sea-fiend you have to deal with."

"I 'm another," laughed Loomis. "I was born under Argo, and can't escape my destiny. We get along excellently together."

And he gave Garth a look in which acquaintance had already given way to comradeship.

CHAPTER VII

IMPASSE

BUT the friendship had little time in which to flower. Garth went home two days later in a taxicab, and Mr. Loomis seemed very indefinite about the possibility of coming to see him.

It seemed years to Garth since he had left the apartment. Hot weather had come while he lay at St. Luke's, and now the high studio windows stood open to the pale summer sky. Bowls of flowers sat here and there, showing starrily in the dim, cool light that filtered through half-drawn green curtains. After the chilling tidiness of the hospital it was a relief to see books on the window-seat and papers strewn on the table, and Rob's pipe on the mantel where it did n't belong. A relief to Elspeth, who had spent almost as much time as Garth at the hospital. Joan stood at the door to welcome them, tall and cool in her pretty white dress. Rob

had come down hatless to the street to carry Garth from the taxicab. It was n't Silver Shoal—but it was home.

Every one had been accustomed for so long to thinking of Garth as inseparable from that high, uncompromising bed at St. Luke's that the surgeon's fair promises were half forgotten. They regarded it as a triumph when he was able to get about again in his old fashion, hardly remembering that eventually he was to go much farther. The doctor laughed at them all. He was still terse, but less violent.

"Stick to the crutches for a few weeks longer," he commanded. "Then we 'll use 'em for kindling-wood. An excellent patient, Mrs. Pemberley. Accustomed to obedience, I see."

"Nautical upbringing," Elspeth explained.

Garth received several wistful notes from Loomis, written with pencil in a handwriting which betrayed the man's unbalanced nerves more than his speech had done. They were nice little letters—mostly about plans for a cruise to be taken some day by himself and Garth. They were all signed "J. L." and bore no date. The writing was by turns strong and decora-

tive, and weakly ordinary, full of breaks and dashes and points made with such erratic vigor as to pierce the paper. Garth replied to these notes at some length, heartily approving the plans for the cruise, but asking if Fogger might be allowed to come, too.

There had been no word of Loomis for some days when he appeared suddenly one afternoon just in time for iced tea in the studio. He wore a double-breasted blue suit, somehow nautical in its cut, and carried a very new white Panama hat in his hand. He accepted tea and rice-cakes with a charming gratitude, and sat down very close to Garth.

"I 've wanted to come often," he said, "but I 've been ever so busy. I have my job. A big South American boat; rather fun, I think. I 'm sailing to-morrow," he added

"Oh, *lots* of fun!" Garth cried. "I don't want you to go, but—"

"Down to Rio," Loomis went on. "Have you been there, Mr. Sinclair?"

"Only down through the Bahamas," said Rob, bringing cigarettes. "Gorgeous stuff to paint."

"It would be nice—that blue, if one could paint it. You can, I suppose," Loomis said.

"Did n't succeed," Rob sighed. "Wait a bit! I believe I can dig up those sketches. You've never seen them, have you, Joan?"

Joan had not, and was all eagerness to see any work of her husband's that he had never shown her. She had not even heard of his youthful cruise in southern waters. They were turning over the sheaf of rough sketches and color-notes—a glorious bundle of blue and violet and orange—when the bell rang.

"Celia, I dare say," said Elspeth, rising. Her familiar "Hello there!" at the door, confirmed the guess. "Mr. Loomis is here," she continued. "There 's still some coldish tea, nice and tinkly. It *is* hot, is n't it?"

Loomis rose, with one of his movements of graceful dignity, to be introduced. He had put down his glass, but still kept one of Rob's sketches in his left hand. The introduction was never made. For Celia stood like a little figure of ice in the middle of the room, her usual delicate porcelain pallor sunk to a dead whiteness. She was twisting her fingers together strangely.

She could not believe that he did not know her, could not believe that he could stand looking politely and expectantly toward her with no

flicker of recognition in his eyes, seeing her only as a chance caller, perhaps affected by the heat. For how strange they must all think her behavior! She put out her hand vaguely.

"Of course . . . Mr. Loomis," she said in a small voice. ("Wyeth—Wyeth—Wyeth—" her heart pounded intolerably.)

"*Please* sit down," Elspeth begged at her elbow. "You 're all gone, my dear! Here, by the window. Tea, please, Joan."

"It is hot—*too* hot," Celia murmured. "I had n't realized."

Oh—she could n't be mistaken! The way his hair grew, square away from his forehead, cutting it across solidly, firmly; the lift of his eyebrows; the way his smile began at one corner of his mouth before it reached the other. His hands she would have known, even without a sight of his face, so individual, so unmistakable. Yet there he stood, looking at her with gentle concern, holding out the tea that he had taken from Joan.

"Thanks, I 'm quite all right," Celia said, after one sip, wondering desperately what she must do. Would a sudden crying of his name startle him into memory of himself, or would he meet it with that same dreadful, polite, baf-

fling look? She must feel the way, she decided.

"Mr. Loomis has just been telling us of his plans," Elspeth bridged hastily, for the situation was somehow unaccountably tense. "He 's sailing to-morrow for South America."

Celia half rose. "Oh, but he can't!" she said.

No one but Elspeth heard. Celia instantly added, "How nice!" and went on: "But has n't Mr. Loomis been ill? Should he travel quite so soon?"

"I 'm all right now, thanks," Loomis said. "Beginning to fret after something to do. I 've always loved the sea."

"I know," murmured Celia.

"Probably the 'change of air,' as the doctors would call it, will do me good, if anything. Have you seen these bully sketches of Mr. Sinclair's, Miss Hampton?"

Celia looked absently toward the pictures he held out.

"Mr. Loomis," she said hurriedly, "forgive me, but—did you ever meet a man called Wyeth Merriman on the other side?"

Rob frowned and looked toward his sister, who raised her eyebrows. They feared Celia was beginning to let slip her reason, to pursue

her search in this way so incoherently. Loomis looked at her thoughtfully.

"Wyeth Merriman—" he said slowly; "I 'm sorry, I can't say that I ever did."

He clasped his hands about his knees, and there showed at his wrist a small old scar. If there could have been any doubt at all in Celia's mind, this cleared it away beyond contention. She lost her nerve; it was too much for her. She had built no wall to resist this.

"Wyeth—Wyeth!" she said; "oh, remember! You *must* remember!" and she beat her hands impotently before him.

"I 'm sorry," he said again, "I don't remember him."

He looked around at the others to see if they were going to help this poor lady, so obviously overcome by the heat.

"You 're sure, Celia?" said Elspeth quickly. "Better not, perhaps."

"But—you know Ned Raymond, don't you?" Celia was saying, more steadily. "I—I 've heard him speak of you, I think. And Kenneth Lewis—and Dick Spofford, and—"

But the names of these, his friends, left the young man's face unlighted.

"It must be another Loomis," he said, perplexed.

"Not Loomis!" Celia persisted. "Oh, not Loomis! Merriman! Wyeth—Wyeth Merriman!"

Then, to every one's dismay, the young man covered his face despairingly with his hands. Garth, who was rather frightened, thought his friend was crying; but he had never seen a grown man cry, and could n't quite believe it.

"See here, Loomis," Robert Sinclair said, a hand on the man's shoulder, "do you really think you 're in any shape to sail to-morrow? You 'd better stay with us a bit and get things straightened out."

But Loomis—for he must be called that, since he could not know himself as Merriman—rose quite square and tall.

"It 's all right," he said. "I 'm all right unless people—people bother me. I—I 'm afraid I 've made a fool of myself. I don't know what it is. I—I can't stand it—having people ask me so many things." He put his hand slowly to his square, straight forehead. "It hurts. It 's just being bothered that makes it. I 'm quite all right, really. Please

forgive me; the tea was so good, and your sketches are splendid, Mr. Sinclair. I 'll remember them, down there. Thank you!''

He was gone. Gone utterly. He had caught the elevator on the wing, and by the time Rob reached the street there was no sign of him. Rob returned, panting, to the studio. Celia had given way altogether, and was sobbing in Elspeth's arms. Joan was distracting Garth, arranging flowers in the dining-room.

''How can we stop him?'' Celia moaned. ''He must be stopped; don't you see that? He 's in no condition to travel alone.''

Elspeth was silent, wondering if perhaps it would not be better for him to get away on his ship, quietly, than to stay here under Celia's desperate probings. She would not be able to let him alone, Elspeth felt quite sure; she would be too anxious to find out if this were the moment, or this, in which his memory of himself might come back. He seemed quite capable of handling his own affairs judiciously when people did n't ''bother'' him. Elspeth saw again that hunted, haunted look in his brown eyes, as his brain beat against an unrecognized barrier that somehow hurt it.

''It 's so strange,'' Celia faltered. ''It

seems to be just that he does n't remember any one he ever knew before, yet he evidently knows about all sorts of things he himself used to do. Does he think he was John Loomis when he did them? Does n't he remember things he did with other people, or only alone? Oh, it 's too much for me. And why John Loomis—*why?*''

Elspeth shook her head. ''Shell-shock is baffling. One hears such strange stories; and they say that the slightest, queerest thing may bring everything back suddenly.''

''How can we stop him!'' Celia repeated. ''Oh, stop him from sailing on that ship!''

''It would be easy enough to find out what boat sails for Rio to-morrow,'' said Rob, ''in the paper.''

But the shipping-news held no mention of such a vessel.

''Can that have been imaginary?'' Celia wondered aloud. ''Was he really going to sail at all? Oh, if he 's all alone now, in New York, not knowing—''

''My dear,'' Elspeth said, ''I don't think you quite do him justice. You 're talking as if he were a lunatic. He 's absolutely sane and completely charming. It 's just that he 's John Loomis, not Wyeth Merriman. Until Merri-

man comes back, I don't think we can safely meddle with Loomis's affairs. He knows what he 's about; you can't expect him to be interested in some one he never heard of. Oh, I know how hard it is!"

"But he 'll never come back," said Celia, blankly. "Neither Loomis nor Merriman. What would bring him back? *I* have no power to," she added with a bitter laugh.

The roses could hold little of Garth's attention. He leaned in the dining-room doorway and looked with some impatience upon Celia. He was rather glad his friend had gone where he would n't be bothered.

"Of course he 'll come back," Garth said, with decision. "He and Fogger and I are going on a cruise some time—he promised. He 's coming to see me again when he gets in. He 's having an awfully nice time the way he is; I don't see why you want him to be somebody else."

"Miss Hampton is n't having a nice time while he 's the way he is," Elspeth said.

She did not mean it for reproach, but Celia felt suddenly ashamed of the somewhat melodramatic scene she had created. A score of thoughts raced through her mind. Was she

not selfish? If he was happier now—as John Loomis— Could he learn to love her all over again—a new Celia, perhaps, worthier than her whom Wyeth Merriman had loved? She sat very still. Elspeth, watching, saw the first gleam of that new Celia dawn quietly in her fixed eyes.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME TRIFLING PRESENTATIONS

IT was not until Garth's birthday that the surgeon's promise came true, and that was early in September. Nine years old! It was hard for Elspeth to believe that; nine years is so very nearly ten.

There was a letter from Jim, miraculously on time, addressed to "Garth Pemberley, A.B." Garth shook his head when he saw that "A.B.," which signified "able-bodied seaman"—but there he stood, straight and moderately steady, in the middle of the room, with the envelope in his hand. The crutches were not yet smashed to kindling-wood, but they had been abandoned for the first time, and were put off with the beginning of his new year. That was even harder for Elspeth to believe. How she wished for Jim, to share their wonder and their joy! Garth brought the letter to his mother—a little self-conscious, feeling all eyes upon his achievement. It was a rather one-sided gait, and

would always be; but to him it seemed the freedom of wings.

Together they read the letter, which was by turns nonsensical and tender after Jim's way; and Garth's arm lay across his mother's shoulder. Elspeth had suddenly the oddest feeling that it was not for support, but in protection. She looked up at him curiously—she sat on a low chair—and caught for the first time a strange, illuminating premonition of what it would be some day to have a tall son, some one as big and as kind as Jim, on whose arm she might depend. The next moment he lost his balance in quite the old way, and caught at her knee. She held him very tight, and laughed at herself, hiding her face in the crisp bronze of his hair.

By chance, there arrived, too, a letter from John Loomis, and a packet addressed in his angular, still erratic hand. It contained a silver chain, possibly linked together by some Inca craftsman, so curious and ancient was its fashioning.

To snap your whistle on, Bo'sun, instead of a lanyard [wrote Loomis]. I traded for it with an old Indian who might have been an Inca himself—he certainly looked antiquated enough.

Loomis did not explain where he was (evidently not in Rio!) or what his plans might be, but he seemed to be enjoying things thoroughly. Garth looped the chain joyously about his neck; it was almost too good to be true—Spanish treasure his very own, to hang a whistle or a compass on. Celia, who was assisting at what promised to be a birthday feast, reached for the letter.

"Bits of his own handwriting gleam through," she said musingly, "just as bits of himself gleamed through, that day. Elspeth, he 'd think it strange of me to write him, I suppose."

"I suppose he would," Elspeth agreed, "considering that he thinks he 's met you only once. Garth might discourse about you somewhat in his next letter."

"Will you, Garth?" Celia said plaintively. "It might help."

Garth wondered what he should find to say about her—he wanted to write principally of the silver chain—but he gave a gallant assent.

Parcels came from unexpected quarters that day. Who could have imagined that there would be one bearing the Quimpaug postmark? Who, in Quimpaug, could have remembered

Garth's birthday? The letter that accompanied the package solved the question. It was headed, "Silver Shoal Light," and it was from 'Bijah Dawson, dear old Cap'n 'Bijah, who had come to keep the light now that the Pemberleys had grudgingly returned to civilization.

GARTH PEMBERLEY, DEAR FRIEND AND SKIPPER [wrote the captain, in the gnarled remnants of a flourishing handwriting that must surely have been taught him in a country school fifty years before]. I guess may be you will be suprized to hear from the old man but he rememberin this date to be some thing extry, reckoned I might take pen in hand as should of done long sence. Me and Caleb is both in good helth and I know you will be pleased to hear the Light she is goin strong only mising the Skipper and his Pa some thing terruble. Last winter after your leaving was a mighty rough season, real catchy spells causin ice to form around the Shoal but no inconveniance experenced in boat travel to Quimpaug. One pile of the pier went out, same was soon replaced by the old man Caleb helpin. This year no sech exitement as was caused last at this date by the goins on of them Boshes as you remember. I am aimin to send you a trifling presentation made by the old man in my spare moments of liesure. Rememberin your hankerings to-wards the Sea and all creeturs in same I reckoned this might be cute, you not seein any such likely down to the City. My respects to your Ma and

Miss Joan now I presume called Mrs. Sinclare. A line from your Family stating news would be greatly apreshiciated by all at Silver Shoal, them not forgettin good friends. Will now close, wishin the Skipper good luck and no head-winds.

Rsptfly yours,
ABIJAH DAWSON, Keeper.

Despite their eagerness to behold the "trifling presentation," the Pemberleys dwelled long upon the letter, which, on rereading, proved to be even more delightful than at first. Elspeth gave it a third chuckling perusal, while Garth snapped the cord of the package with his knife. The "presentation" was wrapped in much rumpled paper, but Garth extracted it at last. Upon a standing photograph frame of the cheapest kind, the Cap'n had laboriously glued a myriad tiny shells, completely hiding the original material, whatever it may have been. The interstices he had painted carefully with red lead, and shellacked the whole so that it glittered unnaturally. It was entirely hideous; but it had been fashioned for love, in the blessed living-room of Silver Shoal.

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Rob, and Elspeth motioned silence.

For Garth, to whom intrinsic beauty was

shadowy, saw, not the ghastly structure of shells and glue, but the Cap'n toiling to make it, with his cap on the back of his grizzled head, and his pipe gone out, and his materials spread on the kitchen-table under the window that looked out on nothing but the sea.

"It 's perfectly beautiful!" said Garth earnestly, clasping the frame to him. "Wait a minute! I know what must be in it—wait!"

They waited, while he made off to his own room, whence sounds of rummaging in his desk could presently be heard.

"My nephew—and he admires it!" groaned Rob.

"I remember liking things, as a child, that really were hideous," Celia said. "Things like that, made of something quite inappropriate."

Elspeth did n't try to explain; she let their talk flit on. And they would only have turned on her aghast if she had quietly told them that she, too, thought the frame was "perfectly beautiful." Garth returned, bearing his gift, and very carefully minding his step—still so new and wonderful to him.

"There!" he announced. "That 's what must be in it, of course!" and he reached up to

put the frame in the very middle of the mantelpiece.

It now held, surrounded by the glittering shells, a snap-shot of Silver Shoal Light, with the *Ailouros* at anchor, and a swell just breaking into foam at the north end of the rock.

"The very thing!" Rob said. "Er—don't you want to have it in *your* room, though?"

"Of course, afterward," said Garth. "But I thought you 'd all want to be able to look at it till to-night."

"I—I appreciate the privilege," Rob said.

But Elspeth drew her son within her arm, that they might look together at the picture.

"Let 's write thank-you letters *now,*" proposed Garth, who never approved of postponing things.

"Which shall we write first?" his mother asked. "Fogger's?"

"Let 's write *first* of all to Cap'n 'Bijah!" Garth said, even while he fingered the Inca chain that still circled his neck.

CHAPTER IX

PEACE

THAT autumn swept the world on in a tumult of hope. The Somme offensive had come to a tremendous head; the American soldiers had done gallant things. In the United States, the fourth Liberty Loan followed on the heels of the fourth draft.

Robert Sinclair, rejected time and again on account of some hypothetical infirmity, found himself suddenly drafted and spirited away to camp, leaving a class at the Three Arts dangling. A new service-flag, with two stars, hung in the window of the studio, and the Sinclair-Pemberley family, shorn now of both its men, turned whimsically to Garth as head of the household.

When, on the last day of October, Turkey unconditionally surrendered, the world listened, tense, for the next nail to be driven in the coffin-lid of the enemy. And the world heard.

It was a day of such still autumn peace that

country byways summoned too irresistibly to go unheeded. Joan and Elspeth and Garth, filled with the spirit of adventure, packed lunch in two brief-cases and set forth on a ferry-boat, they knew not whither. New York dropped away astern till it seemed the fantastic mirage of a cardboard town floating on the water. A curious site for the world's greatest city, after all, this island which looked as though it might at any moment sink under its gigantic load! The boat swung a little, and in the huddled sky-line Broadway suddenly opened an immense gash—a canyon beside the incredible height of the Woolworth Building. Broadway! How remote and impossible it seemed; just a slit in that carven cluster of pearly battlements fading astern.

Garth, who had not seen so many boats for months, had no eyes for Manhattan, however. He beamed upon each tug as on a personal friend, and summoned his relatives in ecstasy to look at a great camouflaged troop-ship, gliding along quietly in her crazy coat of zebra stripes. And then—

"Oh, listen!" he cried. "Oh, I 'd almost forgotten! Why did n't we ever come before!"

It was the bell-buoy on Robbins Reef, chiming dolefully as it rose and fell in the tideway. Beyond, the little reef lighthouse lifted its squat cylindrical tower. Elspeth, too, had almost forgotten. The sound of the bell, the sight of the polished hexagonal lantern and the black iron gallery, caught her somehow fiercely with a rush of homesickness she had not expected.

"*Why* did n't we come before?" Garth insisted. "Boats—and that light, and the Narrows, and everything!"

"And all for five cents," Joan laughed.

"It 's been winter," Elspeth apologized, "except when it was summer—and then you were n't seaworthy enough even for ferry-boat travel."

"That 's so," Garth agreed with a sigh. "But we can do it now, often. Every day?"

"What about St. Hubert's?" his mother reminded him.

Garth subsided into resigned silence. St. Hubert's he persisted in regarding as an accident in his existence—something which interfered with his own affairs and could be escaped at will.

The boat took the adventurers to Staten Is-

land, and from the ferry-house they made their way, on a random-selected trolley-car, to a place far more like country than anything they had seen for some time. They climbed a solitary and alluring byway, which led them, after a freakish course up a hillside of sere trees, to the brow of a splendid height, open and filled with sun and wind. Far below, the bay spread a blue expanse, dotted with insignificant ships. The Narrows opened seaward to the right; far to the left Manhattan showed dimly, a tiny cluster of opalescent towers.

"This is exciting!" Joan cried. "Why aren't we able to break the evil spell and get away from town oftener? I agree with Garth."

"Why didn't we bring Celia?" Elspeth said.

"Bother; why didn't we?" Joan agreed. "She *needs* to get out on a hill and eat with her fingers."

Indeed, Celia had been going about of late like a small, pallid nun, consecrated to some secret vow or penance. Garth couldn't exactly imagine Miss Hampton eating with her fingers. How nice it was to be able to do that, after an eternity of silver and linen and Havi-

land china, however pleasant and civilized! How joyous to sit on a scratchy rock instead of a chair, with dead grass underfoot, and leaves rustling down in the silence, and now and then a gust of salt wind to set every fallen leaf awhirl and snatch an insecurely held paper napkin from some one's lap!

It was early in the afternoon that the strange thing happened—strange, and terrifying, and wildly beautiful. Suddenly, out of the stillness, whistles began to blow, whistles from the factories and power-houses that bordered the island, below. Every boat in the harbor raised her voice in a prolonged bellow; the sound swelled, a distant, solemn, unflagging scream of exultation. Nothing, there on the hill, but the slow zigzag floating of falling leaves, and the insistent, terrible, wonderful crying of the whistles.

The three on the hill rose to their feet and looked strangely at one another. Only one thing could possibly be in any mind.

"The war—is over," said Elspeth, queerly.

A moment more they stood there, while the far, gigantic sound swept and swelled over them; then they could not wait to find if it was true. Madly they stuffed the brief-cases and

hurried down to the trolley-tracks. The car-conductor was the first to confirm the news.

It was a city gone mad that they reached. "The war is over—the Kaiser has abdicated—the armistice is signed!" People were laughing and crying and yelling. The crowds were almost impassable. Packed taxicabs blew their horns incessantly. From the tall down-town buildings showers of paper scraps fell thick on the surging crowd, and streamers of ticker-tape writhed down. Elspeth thought they should never get home safely; they reached the studio exhausted and disheveled. Below in the street, flags waved, motor-horns blared, and people shouted incoherently.

"Will Fogger come right home?" It was Garth's first question, when they had somewhat recovered from their struggle through the mob.

But the destroyers were busy still, it seemed. There came the news of the German naval surrender. Garth spent all his spare time prone over a newspaper or an illustrated weekly, poring over every detail of that vast and impressive ceremony. Had his father's ship been one of those between which the endless gray line of enemy vessels had grimly steamed? Had his father been there, standing

silent on his bridge, to watch the mighty procession pass? No news: not a cable, not a letter, nothing.

More than a year is a long time for a person's Fogger to be away, especially if, until that time, he has never gone for more than twelve hours. And yet—think of all the little boys whose Foggers had been killed, and would never come back at all. Garth couldn't help thinking of that, even though there was peace now on the seas as well as on land.

CHAPTER X

JOY IN THE MORNING

THEN it was Christmas eve again—how the time tripped by!—with still no news of Jim, and from Rob admirably restrained letters of regret that he could not get leave for Christmas. But, great as were the echoes of his name about the galleries, he was nothing but Sergeant Sinclair in camp, and not a very efficient sergeant at that. So it could n't be a very festive Christmas eve, with Jim's whereabouts unknown and Rob an exile eating commissariat chicken and cranberry in a mess-hall.

Joan played carols and Garth picked out what he could of them upon the violin, peering over her shoulder at the piano, and they all three sang, a lonely little trio, there in the big, dusky studio. Three-branched candlesticks at the windows bore steady golden flames aloft; a welcoming fire hummed on the green-tiled hearth.

"Peace on earth, good will toward men," sang Garth. "Peace, peace on earth!"

Yes, the first Christmas of peace. But where was Destroyer *026?* On what secret orders was she bound? Was she rolling to the mid-sea waves now, with merriment in her ward-room and white water slashing across her decks? There would be merriment if Fogger was there! But perhaps it was his watch on the bridge, and he was standing with keen eyes leveled across the black waters, seeing the marvels that do go upon the sea on Christmas eve. Fishes lighting lanterns of phosphor; slow, shimmering sea-beasts circling up from the soundless caverns. . . . O ye whales and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord . . . These were Garth's jumbled thoughts as he fell asleep.

He awoke in the hush of the night with a strange, breathless feeling of having been summoned awake. The Christmas star had passed from the east and was setting over purple-dark housetops. There was no sound; the earth lay waiting for Christmas morning. But it was not the waiting peace without that had wakened him; something nearer, something in the room, close beside his bed, held his drowsy eyes. His mother stood there in her mist-gray kimono, her dark hair spreading like shadow over her shoulders, and beside her was a tall

dark figure that almost melted into the gloom beyond. Just a shifting gleam of silver at his throat, on the anchor and bars broidered across his collar.

But Garth had seen Fogger that way many times—not exactly in a dream; he had even sat up in bed and stared into the dark, till Fogger had faded away and Garth realized that he had never been there at all. He sat up, now, rubbing his eyes, and the shadow that was his mother whispered, "Ssh!" The other shadow bent, then, and kissed his hair. Light as a dream-kiss it was, but Garth, putting out his hands uncertainly, touched a real serge sleeve with a warm, strong arm inside it. But when he tried to hold it, he found that he was grasping the blanket, and that both the shadows were gone. He lay down again.

"That was the realest, queerest one of all," he thought.

He tried to keep awake to see if anything would happen again, but though he thought he never stopped looking at the star, he found that the next thing he saw was sunshine at the window and his mother smiling beside him.

"Merry Christmas, lazybones!" said she. "Up, up, there 's merrymaking abroad."

He sat up at once, still full of the vision of the night.

"You know, Mudder," he said, "I had the queerest thing,—a dream, sort of, only realer. I thought you and Fogger were standing right here, and I felt his sleeve, even; it was real, only it did n't stay."

"How funny," said Elspeth. "I had a very real dream about Fogger, too. Hurry up, now —and do put on a decent necktie."

Garth did hurry; there is a compelling sense of excitement about Christmas morning. No one was in the studio when he sallied out into it. He thought he would lie in wait for his Aunt Joan beneath the sprig of mistletoe which swung between the blue and gold portières. He stood looking up at it and wondering a little where Joan and his mother were, when suddenly he was swept off his feet into the smothering embrace of some one who had come noiselessly behind him.

"If you *will* stand under mistletoe!" said a dear, half-strange, yet wholly familiar voice. "If you *will*—Oh, Pem! Oh, Pem!"

He was being crushed against a blue serge coat; the anchor glittered close to his bewildered eyes, and—oh, dare he look? It was

true, true, true,—the brown face above his, the tawny tumbled hair, the keen, whimsical, sea-gray eyes. It could n't be a dream now; it was n't a dream—it was Fogger, truly Fogger, on Christmas day in the morning!

Elspeth was there too, then, and how the three of them ever managed to disentangle themselves from the huge confusion of hugs was a wonder. How can you know what to say first, after a year? Words came tumbling somehow, all mixed up, and frequently muffled by Garth's burying his face in sudden ecstasy in the blue serge coat.

"Did *you* know?" he asked all at once, with accusing eyes on his mother.

No, she had n't known. Fogger had walked in as calm as you please at 12:15 last night, very much surprised that his cable had n't come.

"You thought your dream was queer," said Elspeth; "can you imagine mine, when I cautiously opened the door an inch and there was a great tall something in a long cloak, who burst open the door and snatched me?"

Garth thought he could imagine, and clutched Jim wordlessly, with a squeak of rapture.

So many things to ask and tell and do! Fogger seemed to be more amazed and interested by the efficiency of Garth's sea-legs than anything else.

"A credit to any quarter-deck," was Jim's ultimate opinion, after a turn up and down the room with his son. "And now let 's heave to and tackle the toast. I have n't eaten for fully a thousand years, and I can no longer stand being to loo'ard of the coffee and bacon."

No use recording the happenings of that day. No one did anything but talk, and Jim was so much the most exciting Christmas present that little attention was paid to other gifts. Celia drifted in for high tea. Christmas alone in town is not much fun; Elspeth regretted that she had not been asked for the day.

"So it 's really the famous you?" Celia said curiously to Jim.

"Famous?" he murmured.

"Your son has written you in letters of gold all over my mind," she told him.

"Fie!" said Jim, shooting a reproachful twinkle at Garth.

"So how could I help but be keen to meet you?" Celia pursued. "But he 's been having a very hard time with me. I 'm afraid

he 's given me up; have n't you, Garth? I 'm such a frightful landlubber, you know."

Garth had given her up, but he said, "Oh, no!" gallantly.

"But I 'm trying very hard to learn to like the sea. People seem to want me to," she added, looking away and thinking of Wyeth Merriman who was John Loomis.

"Town 's no place to learn to like the sea," said Jim, who knew all about Celia. "You'll have to come to us some time, and slop about and find out what we 're talking of."

A gleam kindled Garth's face; he plucked his father by the coat.

"But where 'll we be, to do any slopping about?" he demanded, swiftly, with a hopeful inflection. "Just here all the time."

"Ah!" said Jim.

Garth wheeled to his mother.

"What does he mean?" he cried. "Do *you* know, Mudder?"

"I have n't the faintest idea," said Elspeth. "You ought to be acquainted with his air-of-mystery manner by this time."

"I 'd forgotten, almost," said Garth. "Do you mean we 'll be somewhere else, Fogger,

some time, where we can slop about with the sea?''

''Ask me nothing, boy,'' said Jim, ''for I know nothing. But I can safely assure you that when you 're eighty-two you won't be living in Uncle Rob's studio apartment.''

And that was all the satisfaction any one could get out of Lieutenant J. E. Pemberley.

It seemed, however, as though Jim's next duty would have little to do with the sea. It was to be a series of odd jobs at the Brooklyn Navy-Yard. ''And my only ship,'' said he, ''will be an occasional ferry-boat.'' Elspeth suggested that they should move to Brooklyn, nearer the job, but her husband did not assent.

''Not worth while,'' he explained ambiguously, ''for so short a time. If the Robs will let us stay on for a bit, stay we will. What 's the use of moving twice?''

''But where are we going, when and if we go?'' his family besought him. ''Explain yourself, man!''

''I cannot explain because I do not know,'' Jim replied virtuously. ''I base future hope on vague surmise.''

But before the Navy-Yard summoned him there was a joyous fortnight of leave when

neither Destroyer *026* nor Brooklyn had any claim on him. Two weeks is little enough at that, after a year of absence. Garth, whose Christmas vacation it was, never left his father for a moment, only too well aware of the respective shadows of St. Hubert's and the Navy-Yard looming ever closer to their elbows.

CHAPTER XI

SILVER SHOAL SUMMONS

GARTH, who was sprawled upon the floor with an outspread map occupying most of the surrounding carpet space, looked up as his father came into the room. Jim, regardless of official blue serge, seated himself also upon the floor and dropped an arm across his son's shoulders.

"It 's good to have you, Pem," he murmured. "Such a confoundedly long time it was!"

"Confoundedly," Garth agreed, with warmth. "Do you know, Fogger, I 've thought of a new way through the Archipelago. Torres Straits, and then—look—"

He indicated a serpentine course with an unhesitating forefinger. Jim looked briefly at the map and for a long time at his son.

"Don't you ever think about *anything* but the sea, old boy?"

Garth lifted his nose from its proximity to the Java Sea and said:

"No, of course I don't. Oh, not *every* minute, but mostly other times. Don't you?"

"All the time you 're at St. Hubert's learning quite different things, and all the time you were in hospital being hurt, and—and *all* the time?" Jim ended comprehensively.

"Of course," said Garth, more decidedly than before.

Jim sighed, cast about him for a moment, and said:

"I wonder if it would make us frightfully unhappy, you and me, to go and see how Silver Shoal is faring without us?"

Garth gazed at his father for a long, startled moment. Then the map crackled, as, with one knee in the Indian Ocean, he clutched Jim.

"It would make me awfully unhappy," he said. "But it would be a nice kind. It—it would be like putting iodine on your finger when you 'd cut it; hurt like fits and then make you feel better afterward. Would n't it? Don't you see?"

"I do, yes. I 'd almost reached the same conclusion. But I wanted you to think so, too."

Elspeth and Joan shook their heads when they heard of the proposition.

"You 're very brave people," said Elspeth. "*I 'm* not brave enough to go back to Silver Shoal."

"Even I am not," said Joan. "Yet I was but a stranger and an interloper."

But Jim and Garth bent conspirator-like over time-tables that evening, with the set, rapt faces of the consecrated.

"But, Mudder, have n't I *any* of my other clothes? I *can't* go back in—this!"

"This," scornfully indicated, was an Eton collar. Garth sat upon the edge of his bed in the dawn, half clad and protesting bitterly. There was the English sailor-suit, to be sure. It had not been worn for a year, not since St. Hubert's decreed conventional school-boy attire. "But it was too big for you," Elspeth reflected. The sailor-suit was exhumed with some difficulty from the bottom of a trunk. Jim put a belathered face in at the door to comment and approve. He measured Garth and the sailor-suit with an eye in which doubt dawned and settled.

"Ship it to a refugee!" he observed, as Elspeth extricated her son from the strangle-hold of the jumper. "It will delight the heart of a

potential mariner of France—unless he 's sprung all the seams.''

These had indeed cracked an alarming warning, and Garth was faced with the abhorred tweed.

''She won't know me,'' he mourned. ''She won't *want* to know me!''

''She,'' somewhat vaguely, meant Silver Shoal Light.

Jim did not wear his cape, though Garth urged it in favor of its picturesque appearance.

''Too much of a nuisance,'' Jim said. ''Have you forgotten the winds of Silver Shoal in midwinter? I 'd be blown off the rock like a tops'l in a typhoon.''

At the last moment Elspeth whispered to her son a secret message to the place they had all loved so greatly, and he went off a bit sober, holding Jim's hand. He held it rather tightly, because walking—even now—was not an easy thing, nor would it ever be. Jim carried a small bag which contained the requisites of the two. ''Very masculine,'' had been Elspeth's comment, as she had stirred the contents about with an inquiring finger.

The train was a swift and comparatively silent express, and conversation was possible.

From disjointed observations about the landscape "on the starboard beam," as Garth put it, they fell to discussing the war on the seas and Jim's part in it, and the uninteresting miles flew by unnoticed.

Jim refused to eat at Tewksville Junction; "a pestilential hole," he called it, "full of fossil doughnuts and petrified pie." The dining-car offered a substitute, and Garth, having never before experienced its unique charms, was delighted.

"I feel," said he, putting down his clinking goblet and gazing magnificently out at the flying telegraph-poles, "exactly like a Roman emperor."

"Indeed?" said Jim. "Had Cæsar a private dining-car? Or was it Justinian? These things slip one's memory; but you 're a St. Hubertian."

"You know what I *mean,* Fog—Father."

Jim's lip twitched whimsically.

"'Father,'" he mused inwardly. "And has St. Hubert's done that? Or is it because I 've been away? Or is it just because he 's a twelvemonth nearer being a Boy?"

It was "Fogger" still for the good intimate moments, "Fogger" always, in thought, but a

year ago it would have been equally so, even with these ears of the world listening.

The dingy Tewksville Junction station was the first familiar landmark; the shuttle-train waiting for the boat passengers was the second.

"Even the same conductor!" Garth whispered.

"You 're not like Rip Van Winkle," Jim said. "It 's really not been so long, you know."

S. S. Pettasantuck was the most gratifying landmark. She lay placidly at her pier, comfortingly unchanged, except for a fresh coat of paint and a new burgee at her flagstaff. The engine-room bell was the same—the short, clear stroke, the jingle. Full speed ahead! The burgee snapped out; the churned water at the pier-head dropped astern as the wake straightened and settled to foam-shot green. The *Pettasantuck* fell into her old course, bound for Quimpaug at the mouth of the bay.

Garth rambled about the deck, assuring himself that the old steamer was just as she had always been, wondering wistfully whether she remembered him. The *Pettasantuck* snorted an irritated warning to a tug that swung impu-

denly under her nose, and the sudden whoop of her whistle made Garth jump.

"That 's a lubberly trick," Jim said. "You never used to do that, not even when a whole herd of tugs bleated and bellowed at us till the fog split."

"It was just because I was expecting her to every minute, and hoping she would," Garth explained in a somewhat unsatisfactory fashion.

His eyes fled perpetually landward to catch the first gray glint of Quimpaug's roofs clinging like barnacles to the hill above the harbor. Just as the steamer swung toward the port, he snatched his hand from his father's and leaned over the rail flourishing a wild arm toward a patched sail that was bobbing out from behind the point.

"Look, Fogger! *Is* it the *Ailouros?* Oh—"

Jim, with a swift hand beneath his son's arm, swung him bodily across the deck, and threw such inspired zeal into his comments on a rather stupid lighter which was coming in, that Garth was wholly deceived and did not look back at the cat-boat. But Jim, with a quicker eye, had recognized her instantly; his own boat, how could he mistake her? He had seen what

he hoped Garth had not: the rust-streaked stern, the dirty cockpit, the untidy tangle of ropes, the slit and ill-patched canvas, and the slovenly fisherman huddled coldly against the tiller with his muddy boots cocked over the coaming. Jim talked on violently for some time after the lighter had fallen astern, and realized all at once that his grip on Garth's shoulder was inhumanly tight.

On the pier at Quimpaug a young man in rubber boots informed them that the hotel was closed in winter.

"I *did* feel like Rip Van Winkle, then," Garth confided to his father afterward. "I almost looked to see if I had a long white beard."

"We don't want the hotel, thanks," said Jim, now. "We want a boat."

The young man stared, but presently informed them that he himself had a boat.

"Good," said Jim. "We want to go out to Silver Shoal Light."

"Vis'tors ain't been 'lowed out to the Light this year," the young man said. "Dunno whether they 've changed the rulin' sence the armistick, but I reckon not. Powerful cold, anyways."

"We want to go," said Jim, "to Silver Shoal Light."

The rubber-booted one shrugged his shoulders. He looked narrowly at Jim, and observed:

"If you 're a bony-fide navy officer I s'pose it 's all right. But," he added impersonally, "we had some spy trouble out ther' last year."

"Indeed?" said Jim.

"Yus," said the man, who had led them to his craft—a battered power cat-boat, "I wa'n't here myself; be'n fishin' other pa'ts some consid'able years. But 't was all round, how it happent. Likely you heard tell on it off the papers."

Jim intimated ignorance of the affair.

"Durned German that had be'n passin' himself off fer some furriner snuck up one night an' kotched the keeper ('t wa'n't the keeper 'at 's ther' now) an' his wife out in their boat, an' then he went out to the Light whar ther' was on'y one pore female o' some kind an' a little kid that could n't make no use of his laigs nohow, an' tied 'em both up, an' blowed out the light so 's to pile up a transport was a-comin'

down, onto the rocks. Huh! durned spy!"

Garth smothered a curious squeak, and Jim said mildly:

"Dear me! And what then?"

"By jinginny, that young 'un got hisself down the stairs (the woman she was tied up to the wall so 's she could n't waggle an eye-winker), an' he got him a big knife an' hiked it along back up an' got her off. An' she run licketty-wiggle up the tower an' lit up the light an' the transport was a-comin' down jest as slick 's you please, purty nigh onto the Reef. Guy! 'Bijah Dawson, keeps the Light now, tolt it to me, an' I thought mebbe he was thinkin' o' some movie picksher-show up to Milltown; but no sirree sir, it 's O.K."

"It sounds," said Jim, "distinctly improbable."

Garth made no comment on this account of his adventures, and his fingers tightened on Jim's arm. For out in the gray sea before them Silver Shoal lifted its white tower above its gray-roofed house. The great storm-windows were in place, and no flower-boxes brightened the wall beneath the green shutters. Where the *Ailouros* had been used to rise and fall and tilt like a dreaming gull, the squat

Lydia now butted her somber nose methodically at her buoy.

"It 's almost light-up time," Garth murmured. "We *must* be there at light-up time."

He of the rubber boots looked inquiringly at Garth, then hastily in the direction of Silver Shoal's landing, where an irate figure stood waving a warning arm.

"I tolt you, Sam, not to bring no folks out here!" shouted this person. "It 's agin rules nowadays, an' I ain't received no contrary orders, an' I ain't a-gonna let nobody in jest because them tarnal Botches has guv in a mite!"

Garth cast his incognito to the winds and himself upon the gunwale.

"Cap'n 'Bijah!" he hailed vigorously. "Oh, it 's just—us!"

The old man's arm fell to his side, and his stare as the boat drew in beside the landing was only equaled by that of the man in the rubber boots. Jim leaped to the pier, a tall figure buttoned to the throat in his blue overcoat, the fading light winking on the gold bands across his shoulder-straps. He put out a quick arm to Garth, who disembarked with less agility.

"Wal, by the humpkins!" shouted 'Bijah.

"'*T is* you! *'T is!* Wal—" Speechless he stared at them, and Jim wondered whether Garth was going to laugh or cry, his expression was so extremely queer.

"I did n't scurcely know ye," 'Bijah apologized, "Cap'n, in yer unyform—an' Ga'th, you an' yer biled shirt, an'—an'—" The old man stopped, puzzled for a moment. "Seems to me thar 's more 'n that 's changed ye."

Garth strode three magnificent paces toward 'Bijah, holding himself commendably straight —so straight, in fact, that he nearly lost his balance. The Cap'n seized both his hands and shook them vigorously.

"Gorry!" he roared, "Gorry! *Thet 's* it! Oh, Ga'th—oh, Ga'th!"

"But I 'm not an A.B. even yet," said Garth.

"Oh, pshaw," growled 'Bijah, still holding his hands; "pshaw, don't ye say that."

And Sam of the rubber boots hastily started his engine and backed away from the landing, appalled by the sight of 'Bijah Dawson—his eyes glittering with tears—being clapped repeatedly on the shoulder by a tall naval officer, and embraced by an enthusiastic small boy who laughed and wept simultaneously.

'Bijah's sticks of furniture changed the look

of the living-room. He had boarded up the fire-place and set up an air-tight stove for the winter. There were no curtains at the windows nor at the steep stairway. 'Bijah took the bag and put it upon the table.

"Set ye down an' make yerselves homy," he urged excitedly. "I gotta go an' light up; I won't be no longer 'n I hev to. But, my livin' senses! You 'll want to come up, too. Ain't I the pore idjit, now!"

"We should like to," Jim said.

"We must," Garth murmured.

There were not so many oilskins in the service-room passage, now; only 'Bijah's stiff old Cape Anns swinging from one of the hooks. The oars of the dory leaned in the corner, just as they always had. 'Bijah set a foot upon the first step of the tower stair and then withdrew it.

"Come to think on 't," he said, "what 's the uset? You an' him knows her better 'n I do. Go ahead up thar, Cap'n—an' light up!"

And he feigned a sudden violent desire to polish an already glistening five-gallon oil-can.

Where the spiral staircase completed its second turn, Garth stopped and leaned against the wall.

"Go on, Fogger," he said. "I don't think I can."

"Is it likely I 'd go on?" Jim asked, as he lifted Garth into his arms.

"I thought perhaps I could, now. Fogger—you ought n't to; I 'm too big."

"Not yet," Jim said. "You may have got into a tight place with that sailor-suit this morning, but you 're not too big for me yet—not for all your tweed and fine linen and your high-water mark on the door-post, my Pem."

The curtains in the lantern were closed. Jim drew them back and took the covers from the lamp. The facets of the big lens winked out like so many dew-drops at dawn. Jim hovered about touching now one thing, now another, establishing again his relations with his old command, assuring himself that everything was as it should be. He lighted the lamp, finally, and it responded with its wide, gathered beam, hardly visible yet on the gray sea-surface where dusk had not fallen.

Garth leaned at the rail of the gallery, and Jim joined him there. Silently their eyes swept the remembered spaces, resting upon Trasket Rock, dark and gaunt and very lonely; upon Bird Rock, where squadrons of gulls were

assembling for the night; upon the roughened, ratcheting water where the current pulled past Breakneck into the Rip. Very far off, the last finger of sunset lay on Hy Brasail, making it look indeed like an isle of the blest—a rosy, flying island hovering gold above a great somber sea. When that last sun-gleam left it, it vanished as completely as any magic land, sinking into the low mist of the up-shore horizon. Far outside a scud of smoke whipped out at intervals and was lost in the trailing gray of the wind-clouds. Garth shivered suddenly.

"Cold?" Jim inquired, in a studiously offhand tone.

Garth shook his head. There was a very slight reproach in the action. The quick winter night had dropped, and Silver Shoal took up its work seriously, cleaving the seaward gloom with a radiant shaft. Lights swung down past the point—slipping red and green—and the rhythmic stamp and swish of an unseen boat rose out of the darkness.

"I could just stay here, and stay here, and die," Garth said at last.

Jim shook himself straight and turned away from the railing.

"You *will* die," he said, "of pneumonia, if

you stay up here much longer. The four winds are tuning up, and we 'll have a merry concert to-night. All the arpeggios of the east fleeing up and down the high seas.''

''That 's nice, sort of,—arpeggios of the east,'' Garth reflected as they went down. ''If a person could only play things like that on a violin!''

'Bijah had spread an assortment of his usual ''vittles'' on the table, and Caleb—longer of jaw and milder of eye than ever—was dishing up any quantity of potatoes in the kitchen. As Caleb never was known to speak for himself, 'Bijah spoke for him when they sat down.

''He 's my shore 'nough assistant now. He 'll be keeper yet, ef he lives long 'nough. Won't ye, hey, ye elonguated ol' sea-hoss?''

Caleb assented by a placid monosyllable, and let his fascinated eyes stray from Jim to Garth, on whom he bestowed several hearty nods and winks of approval. The Cap'n alternated between periods of joyous garrulity and lapses of silence, when he strove to make up for time lost by appallingly vigorous attacks on the potatoes and salt fish.

''But *now* then,'' he said, when they were

all gathered up to the stove, later, "ain't nawthin' to hender, an' I want fer ye to tell us all the news."

The news amounted to a good deal, for it included much recounting of experiences in the dangerous waters; and Caleb's knee must have become quite battered from the number of thumps and slaps he felt compelled to give it as Jim's tales progressed. A bit of information let fall by the way was the fact that Garth now played with some small skill upon the violin. Up jumped 'Bijah like one inspired.

"Wal now, who 'd 'a' thunk that!" he exclaimed. "They 's no end to yer surprises, seems so. But I know what ye kin do fer us, then, Ga'th. Look 'ee here what I got; mebbe that 's a surprise fer *you!*"

The Cap'n had crossed the room and was tugging at the clasps of a battered old case in the corner.

"Never knowed I had a fiddle, did ye? Wal, I used to fiddle it some when I was a young feller an' we 'd get gammin' on a whaler. Reckon I could n't make no noise now that 'd sound handsomer 'n a shoat under a palin' fence."

He thrust the violin toward Garth, an old

fiddle as black as a coal and a bow warped awry.

"*You* play," Garth said, with a little deprecatory gesture, and a sudden disarming smile. "Please!" he begged, as the Cap'n wavered.

The old man shot a tentative look at Caleb, immovable, and Jim, encouraging; plucked the strings feebly; then, tuning up, flung himself into a chair, cocked one foot on the stove-guard, and began desperately to play. His big, stiff fingers stumbled at first, and the old unrosined bow scraped and slipped wildly; but presently both Cap'n and fiddle began to warm, and "Molly Boon" flew with tolerable speed and certainty from the frayed strings. Quite carried away by his own performance and stirred with rushing memories of many a dog-watch, 'Bijah dropped into one old tune after another, while the soles of Caleb's large boots kept time on the floor to the fiddle's jigging squeak.

"By Jawge," the Cap'n cried all at once, the bow arrested, "I clean forgot you was the one to play! I got me so fur back yonder I went clear off my course! Here now!"

The fiddle changed hands, Garth disclaiming any ability to sound much better than the afore-

"That ain't fiddlin'—that's violinin'"

mentioned shoat, after such a performance as the Cap'n's.

"I could n't play this summer, because I was in hospital," he explained, "and I don't know much about it, anyway."

"Oh, pshaw!" said 'Bijah, ramming his pipe with a seasoned finger. "*I* ain't played—not so 's to mention it—fer forty year, an' I never knowed *nawthin'* about it to start with!"

So Garth stood up beside the boarded fireplace and lifted the warped bow. His eyes sought for a moment the blank window-pane, beyond which a faint sound of wind and water was audible; then his forehead knit slightly, and he began to play. Grieg's "Sailor's Song" is—as far as notes go—a very simple thing, and it was well within his reach technically. But it was not a season's schooling in music that had put the wild and windy quality into this that he was playing. Four years at Silver Shoal Light had added what metronome and music-master could not give. The lusterless strings twanged metallic, the bow squeaked direfully, but something in the minor simplicity of the notes spoke of things far bigger than the instrument that voiced them. The last plaintive cadence fell into a silent room;

Caleb's boot-soles were motionless, 'Bijah's pipe had gone out.

"That ain't fiddlin'," he sighed ruefully; "that 's violinin'."

Garth laid the fiddle across 'Bijah's knees, and Jim consulted a watch.

"Goodness save us!" he cried. "Three bells in the first night watch! This is no sort of time for you to be around. Report to the bridge at once, sir, and then turn in."

CHAPTER XII

THE GOOD SHIPS' ANCHORAGE

"I'VE put ye in the front room," 'Bijah said, turning a lamp-illumined face upon them from the stair-head. "Bed 's a wide 'un, an' Caleb an' me 'll bunk elsewhar."

When he had gone, with a crushing hand-grip apiece, Jim and Garth took up the lamp and prowled about for a little time. They stood longest in Garth's old room, Jim holding the light high as their eyes swept from wall to wall. There were the big eye-bolts where Joan had been bound by the spy "—and the nail where the picture of my ship hung; and the schooner-model was on that shelf—" Nothing was to be seen from the window now; nothing but encircling blackness, out of which came the sound that held their hearts silent for a moment,—the melancholy boom and hiss of water-voices at the tower-foot.

But they laughed a great deal as they were undressing in the big room that had been Jim's and Elspeth's.

"Do you remember the time you fished out of your window and actually hooked a chogset, and when you hauled him in over the window-sill he slithered all over the bed and flipped off into the waste-paper basket?"

Thus Jim, rummaging the bag.

"I should say I did! Mudder did n't like it."

"Do you blame her, with the trail of the chogset all over her babe's pillow?"

"I was n't a babe. I was big enough to have fish-hooks."

"That 's figurative, my dear; merely fig-u-ra-tive. You *were* a babe, though, when you used to think that the sea-serpent might conceivably pay us a visit. Creepy-crawly up the stairs, creepy-crawly—"

"Ugh!" said Garth. "You make *me* creepy-crawly! I did think he might. It was some nasty story you told Mudder about a squid or something."

"I never tell nasty stories," Jim said with some asperity. "Only nice ones about nice things—like the old ones we told on the landing."

A pajamaed figure sprang upon him forthwith.

"Tell one now! When we 're in bed! This is special; oh, it would n't be all the same, if you did n't!"

"But, my good lad, 't is nigh ten o'clock," Jim objected. "Even special; come now, really!"

But when he had blown out the oil-lamp and slid under the rough seaman's blankets beside his son, Garth won him over with subtle cajolery.

"Very well, then," Jim capitulated, "two minutes' worth. So!

"There was once a brig, and she had tasted the dawn on every sea and drunk of the moonlight on deep waters, till her sails were webbed and thin-drawn and her old bows were as gray with salt and sea-drift as a winter fog. So old she was, so old, that no man dared venture her to another cruise, and they towed her up-harbor and left her warped in to a rotting pier for the breaker and his men to have their way with. But one night, when the moon scudded high and the blown cloud followed, the deep-sea wind called her, and she lifted to it proudly and listened. And she knew that she could never die content but on the sea's heart, and thither she must go. The deep-sea wind filled her slack

canvas and gave her strength to part her cables. Then the soul of her rose and stood at the helm, and she dropped down the harbor mouth and stood off on a phantom tack for the midmost waters. Slowly she woke. The binnacle-lamp glowed with phosphor, and port and starboard her running-lights came out like two jewels. No voice there was aboard her—nothing but the little clapping sound of the reef-points and the swing of the sea away from her foot. For there was no man upon her—naught but the soul of her that stood white at the wheel, holding her to her course. And where the midmost waters leap together, there she drove on under the moon, waiting her master's pleasure. Out of the midmost waters gathered a great wave, a great mighty wave, crested with phosphor and green as jade. Straight to her foreroyal it mounted, and she rose to meet it with a thrill. For a moment there was naught but the wail of the rigging and the shout of the sails, but above it came the great glad cry of the soul of her, as she went to the Good Ships' Anchorage, under the deep waters."

A small sigh came from beside Jim, and he said:

"Good night, best of shipmates."

There was no answer, but, after so long a time of silence that Jim thought him asleep, Garth said:

"Fogger,—*do* you think it was the *Ailouros?* That we saw?"

Jim lay undecided for a long moment. The tone told him beyond doubt that Garth had seen the unlovely state of the boat. An inflection held an opening, invited a negative answer. For an instant he longed, cowardly, to feign sleep. Then he hedged drowsily:

"That was n't the man I sold her to."

"Was n't it?" Garth's hand sought Jim's beneath the blanket, and found it. His voice spoke very softly, for his father's ear. "I wish, Fogger, that the *Ailouros* could go to the Good Ships' Anchorage—all by herself, like the brig."

"When her day is over," Jim said gravely, in the darkness, "she will go. She may not sail out alone to the midmost waters, like the brig, but the good clean little soul of her will find the Great White Anchorage somehow. Because all that makes a boat what she is, good or bad, must live somewhere when she 's gone; and the *Ailouros* will find her anchorage in the hearts of us two, that loved her."

Another sigh in the dark, and Garth was asleep with his cheek to Jim's and his hand growing less tight in the other's.

"A year is not after all so very much," Jim whispered to the shadowy ceiling. "But another year—what will that do to him? Or will any of the years change him, fundamentally, from the very small person who, even when he lay among pillows on the landing, used to blow rapt and solemn kisses to the sails on the horizon?"

It was long before Jim fell asleep. He lay straight and wide-awake under the roof that was no longer his, listening to Garth's sweetly steady breathing beside him, and to the less regular crawling of the tide into the rock-fissures below. He lay so long that he heard the kitchen clock strike two. It was the only other waking thing, except Silver Shoal Light itself, doing its work above with tireless and solitary vigilance.

Garth could n't altogether believe it when he woke the next morning: Fogger there beside him, and a sound of water thrashing below the window. Fogger was asleep. Garth sat up cautiously and looked out. Yes, instead of

housetops there was a heaving, slate-gray sea out there, with spray dashing over the landing and freezing to salt ice as it fell. The headland behind which Quimpaug lay was just catching the first pale reflection of sunrise. Garth slid noiselessly out of bed and stole into his own old room. Cap'n 'Bijah was asleep there, snoring splendidly. But beyond the window the sun was rising, a cold, pale, winter sun, shouldering through masses of straight purple cloud above the horizon. The sea was dark and immense, stretching straight away to Spain beyond the sunrise. The storm-window rattled sharply as a sudden gust swept against it, and a spatter of spray dimmed the glass, although the window was twenty feet above the sea. Terrible and beautiful—Silver Shoal in winter. Garth stood shivering with combined rapture and cold, and crept at last, half frozen, back to his father's warm nest of blankets. As he curled up there, Jim spoke dreamily with eyes still closed:

"—and when a cheerless dawn broke, he found that he was alone in the icy waste, with the brigantine gone save for a floating timber here and there, and he with his arm hooked over an iceberg. A cold—cold—iceberg." Here

he opened one eye. "Eh, it 's you! What have you been a-doing of, mate, that I should take you for an iceberg?"

"You did n't really, Fogger," said Garth, who never, even yet, could tell when his father was in earnest. "I was in my room, looking at things."

"Foolish procedure," muttered Jim. "Uncommonly foolish. I, for one, am going to finish the rest of my watch below in my bunk."

So Garth went to sleep again, after all, and knew nothing more till 'Bijah sang out tremendously from below, and a pervasive aroma of coffee and salt pork and johnny-cakes was abroad.

There is not much one can do out of doors in a sea-bound lighthouse in January. But it was enough of joy to sit in the tight little white-walled living-room, listening to the boom of wind without and watching the solid gray rollers shatter into cold foam at the end of the rock. St. Hubert's and the Brooklyn Navy-Yard were centuries away. Garth would have chosen to forget them forever. It was Fogger who relentlessly consulted the time-table. But wind and waves, it seemed, could combine

to make the time-table a useless bit of paper and the train an inaccessible toy.

"Dassn't to take ye in," stated 'Bijah, who came back from the landing with his oilskins crackling and his moustache frozen. "The *Lydia* she 'd ship 'em by the gallyon, not to speak o' yer bein' friz."

Jim, who had known Silver Shoal for a number of winters, agreed, staring at the storm with a singularly cheerful expression for a delayed traveler.

"Then there 's nothing for it," he said with a grin, "but to settle down and make the best of it."

The day grew to a tumult of wind and water noises; doors shook and foam slatted sharply against windows. Caleb carried in armfuls of wood for the air-tight stove, and, with toes at a comfortably cozy distance from it, the four sat and yarned away the hours. Garth was engaged in whittling a boat—a delightful and rather messy occupation, not much indulged in at the studio.

"Still at it, hey?" 'Bijah commented. "City ain't hendered yer likin's fer the sea none? Ner it ain't spiled yer eye fer a good line,

nuther, I reckon,'' he added, gazing with approval at the little schooner-hull growing under Garth's knife.

The old man shifted his feet on the stove-guard and chuckled.

''Kind o' funny—jest us four men-folks. Don't seem nateral to you, I guess, Cap'n?''

Jim, indeed, found Silver Shoal the same and not the same. Nor could it ever again be the same. His wistful memory clothed it once more with the aspect of those four happiest of years when they had fled from civilization, he to rest and write, Garth to win back to health, all of them to find joy and peace. He saw again the books, the fire, the settle at the hearth, the lamplight on bright brass and blue curtains, Elspeth in the doorway with gladness in her eyes, a five-year-old Garth gazing soberly beyond the black pane. Jim laughed, now, a little, and knocked out his pipe slowly.

''Us four men-folks,'' he said meditatively. ''Do you hear that, over there, you elderly maker of chips?''

Then he went and looked out at the storm, which was breaking a little, and at his son, who had n't heard the remark at all because he was

pondering a matter of proportion, and then he said, "Heigh-ho!" and refilled the pipe.

New York, when they returned to it, swallowed the memory of the visit and made it all seem a briefly enacted dream. Yet the dream lingered; tingling spray and storm-sound in the square gray confines of Silver Shoal Light stayed with them.

"But it wants us," Garth confided to his mother in the darkness of his room at bedtime, "just the way we want it. Cap'n 'Bijah keeps all the oil-cans polished—even brighter than Fogger did, I do think—but he doesn't know about things. Other things—*you* know—"

Elspeth knew. No mermaids played in the moonlight on the shoal for Cap'n 'Bijah, she feared. There was no magic in an air-tight stove as there had been in driftwood flames that curled green and purple up the chimney. He tended the Light and he was proud of it, but had it ever spoken to him with its calm, radiant voice?

The sun goes down to other seas, the moon is on the wane,

The timid stars are all blown out and curtained by
the rain,
But like an opening flower I spread the petals of my
light
To daunt the sea and set you fair upon your course
to-night. . . .

Jim's lines slipped through Elspeth's mind.

"Are you glad or sorry you went?" she asked.

"Glad, I think—yes, I 'm sure I am," Garth said. "And, anyway, it 'll know we have n't forgotten it. It *does* know—does n't it, Mudder?"

"Surely it does, dearest," she answered him, with his eyes entreating her in the dusk.

Celia Hampton was really eager to hear all the details of the Silver Shoal trip. When Garth found that she was in earnest, he became eloquent and gave her full measure. But Celia was more and more in earnest, of late. What she said now she meant. She launched questions and returned answers straight from an open mind, instead of drawing casually upon a mixed fund of perfunctory interests. In other words, her mental wall had become so low that it was no longer necessary to storm

and scale it; it could be crossed at a step. This was the more to her credit, because she was quite as anxious about Loomis as before. Perhaps the difference was that her pity was now all for him instead of for herself. At all events, other people found that they could love her as well as sympathize with her now; and her fragile beauty had grown with her spirit.

Elspeth stood quietly beside her husband at the door, to watch and smile. Celia sat on the hearth-stool, hands tucked about knees and unfeigned interest shining gaily from her upturned face. The fire spun a nimbus of copper about her fair, wavy hair. Garth, one foot stoutly on the fender, stood above her, retailing some point for her delectation.

"Then Cap'n 'Bijah played the violin for us," he was saying, "and that *was* a surprise. *He* said it would n't sound any better than a pig under a gate, but it was nice, really, and—"

"Handsomer!" said Jim suddenly, entering. "Handsomer 'n a shoat under a palin' fence. A pig under a gate, indeed! Pem, you misrepresent the Cap'n's style of simile."

Celia looked up, laughing, as Elspeth came toward them.

"This has just come in the mail," Elspeth said, "and will interest you both."

She extended to Garth a gray envelope, addressed to him in the black, vigorous writing of John Loomis. Garth sat himself down on the other side of the hearth and opened the letter in a businesslike manner with his knife, which was attached to the silver chain Loomis had given him.

"He 's in Trinidad," Garth announced, puzzling over the scribbled lines. "Wait a minute; it 's all mixed up.

" 'I shall probably drift back coastwise to Rio very shortly, and perhaps really north from there if I can get a ship. Glad you like the chain. I 've been having fun with new stars—the Net and the Swordfish and of course the Southern Cross itself, all tangled up in the Milky Way. My ships are n't your kind, being rusty freighters mostly, but the stars are just as good as anybody's. Why do you always write to me about Miss Hampton? Did she get over her sunstroke?' "

He had read it before he could stop.

"What sunstroke?" Celia cried. "Garth, you never told him I had a sunstroke!"

"No," Garth said, "I did n't. You had n't.

You told me to write about you, or Mother did; you know, on my birthday that time. So I did, but I 'm afraid it did n't do any good."

"The 'sunstroke' evidently refers to that fearsome hot day of your meeting last summer," Elspeth suggested.

"Is that how it impressed him?" Celia murmured. "Is there more, Garth?"

"No," said Garth, folding the letter and putting it in his inside pocket.

The rest of the letter had said:

Don't write about her—I think she bothered me. What about your sea-legs?

J. L.

No one blamed Celia for being quiet at tea-time and leaving soon after. Elspeth was sorry she must go, sorry to think of that furnished room down town with only anxiety and reproach and fading hope to share it. But the hospitality of the studio was not Elspeth's to give, and she could only kiss Celia at the door, and whisper:

"Let 's pretend!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE PLEASANT OUTLOOK

THE city has a way of devouring monthfuls of time; that is one thing that can be said for it. St. Hubert's, of course, left only margins of days, and quite suddenly it was late April, and Easter vacation. Garth took a very casual leave of his school, not knowing, of course, that he was never going back to it. What happened was that Jim was ordered to Newport, which was why he 'd been saying, "Ah!" so mysteriously. Not that Garth knew what there was to say "ah" about. He marshaled all the facts he knew about Newport and passed them in review before him. It had once been the capital of Rhode Island—that one was told in the history books; it was on the shore of Narragansett Bay—the geography book showed that; it was supposedly inhabited wholly by very grand folk who lived in palaces of marble. Oh, yes, and there was an old mill which might or might not have been built by vikings. That

interested Garth more than the palaces. Since Fogger was ordered to the Torpedo Station, it argued the presence of sea—or at least bay—somewhere near. The map confirmed that, and Garth kindled. Even if he had to live in one of those marble palaces of which, somehow, he fancied the whole town must be built, he thought there must at least be glimpses of the water.

Jim went ahead to find a house. Apparently he found one, for trunks presently squatted in corners of the apartment, and Elspeth bent feverishly over them with armfuls of things.

"There 's no use asking me what it 's like," she told Garth again and again, "because I do not know. Fogger manages to write everything I want to hear about cupboards and closets and such, without giving me an idea of what the place is like. He says it 's furnished, and that we 'll both like it, and that we 're in luck."

"Is it on a street, Mudder, like this?" Garth asked.

"Not like *this*," Elspeth said, gazing down into the canyon of the avenue. "But I don't know what sort of street it is on. Fogger says, 'a pleasant outlook.' That might mean almost

anything, from a maple-tree in one's front yard to a park opposite, or—''

''Or the sea,'' Garth murmured.

''I 'm afraid we 're not in quite such luck as *that,*'' his mother said. ''And I can't imagine Fogger's describing the sea as a 'pleasant outlook,' anyway. Must you really take *all* those models, dearest?'' she added plaintively, indicating an arm-load of whittled hulls, all very much alike, which he had dumped down before her.

''Well, this one I *must,*'' he explained, turning them over, ''and this one 's really different, though it does look just the same; and this is the best of all; and this—''

''Oh, they 're not a bad shape to poke into corners,'' his mother capitulated. ''I see they must all go, of course.''

The Sinclairs saw Garth and his mother off. Jim was waiting in Newport, with the house open and more or less in running order. Celia wanted to come down to the pier, too. With Elspeth's going she felt that she was losing all that stood between her and desperation. She was afraid that the specters in the furnished room might be too much for her, but

she determined to fight them with everything that Elspeth had given her of courage and philosophy.

"Only think, I never have slept on board a boat *yet!*" Garth cried, trying to get a first glimpse of the Sound steamer.

That was true; for all of his sea-fever, he never had. That the trip was to be by water, and at night, filled him with huge satisfaction. The steamer lay at her pier in the North River, only a square white bit of her side visible through the opening in the wharf-house. There all was dim and filled with bustle. Horses' hoofs thudded; electric baggage-trucks skimmed about.

"How big is she when you can see all of her? Do you know how many knots she can make, Mudder? Oh, *look* at the size of her paddle-wheel! Could she go across the Atlantic if she wanted to?"

Jim being absent, no one in the party could answer these rapid-fire queries. It was good-by, then, to the Sinclairs, and over the gang-plank. The stairs to the saloon were brass on the edges and rubber in the middle, quite different from any stairs Garth knew. They led to the bright, red-carpeted main saloon, where

the orchestra was tuning up on the gallery. The stateroom was beyond, on a little passage from the end of which a glimpse of sky and a puff of river-smell came through. The big brass key turned in the lock—hollow, cavernous, a promise of adventure behind that white paneled door.

"Real bunks, Mudder!" Garth was rapturous. "May I sleep in the top one? Do they just *give* you this soap? Oh, wouldn't it be fun if we were going around the world on her!"

Elspeth thought she might prefer larger quarters for a trip around the world. She stowed a bag under the lower berth, and they sallied out again. They climbed up many steep iron steps to the hurricane-deck, and walked toward where the bow of the boat cut across the hazy sunset.

"You can see into the pilot-house," Garth stated, hovering beside an open door. "Did you ever see such a big wheel! Do they mind if you stand here on the step?"

"They" apparently did not mind. Presently a young quartermaster emerged and beat violently upon a great bell; the captain stationed himself at his window and laid his hand upon

the engine-room signal. Then the boat, with one prolonged bellow of "I 'm co-o-o-o-o-ming!" from her deep whistle, began moving out from the pier. The big steamer picked her way majestically down the crowded river, from time to time raising her mighty voice in a sonorous blast. She swung around the Battery and swept into the East River; the gray curves of the Brooklyn Bridge loomed nearer.

"She 'll never get under there!" gasped Garth, with fascinated eyes on the flagpole and smoke-stack of the steamer, which seemed to rise far above the girders of the bridge. "Can she, Mudder? Oh, it *will* break!"

But the towering stack seemed to dwindle as she approached; the bridge shot up higher and higher above; the illusion vanished and she sailed under at the very last instant, unhurt, seemingly a little proud of her own cleverness in telescoping herself. But Garth drew a long breath of relief, and watched her progress toward the next gray span with fascinated interest. It was violet dusk before the last bridge was passed. The ruddy star of the lighthouse at the end of Blackwell's Island slipped by; red and green, the lights that mark the great middle span of Hell Gate gleamed ahead.

"Don't you feel *any* pangs of hunger?" Elspeth inquired at last.

"I forgot about eating," Garth confessed. "I forgot we could eat on board. I suppose," he added with a sigh, "we 'd just sit up here all night if we waited for it to stop being nice!"

"I suppose we should!" his mother agreed.

Supper, brought in silver dishes by obsequious blacks, was amusing. Afterward, Garth was suddenly immensely sleepy. He wanted to stay awake to enjoy the upper berth, but that was not easy. Everything was dark except the filigree pattern of light above the door. The glasses in the rack above the wash-stand rattled slightly. The upper berth itself vibrated and creaked. There was a fading, swelling rush of water away from the paddle-wheels, perpetually. People walked past the windows; their footsteps made a quick short sound without reverberation. It was funny to have people walking so very near to one's bed, yet so far away. Very—very—far away—

Garth woke momentarily, much later. There was no sound but the noises the boat made. Sometimes the mattress pressed hard against him; sometimes he almost floated up away from it. His overcoat, on the door, flopped with a

steady motion. A long creak, a lifting, the pause on the crest of the swell—then the settling swish as the boat swept down into the trough. She was going around Point Judith.

Garth meant to stay awake that time, too, but he did n't. The next thing that woke him was a quick thumping at the door, and a voice that cried, "Newport!" Just like that: *Bang-bang-bang*—"Newport!" But it was the middle of the night! He had n't realized the other end of the journey at all. At first he was too sleepy to know exactly what he was about. There was Mudder, all dressed, and helping him to lace his boots. Gradually he woke more thoroughly and began to feel a rushing sense of excitement.

The knock and the voice had certainly roused them soon enough. Lights were still slipping by across black water when they stumbled down to the gangway. Then the engine-room bell—the red light on a dolphin gliding past—a lit wharf-head springing up just outside—men running with hawsers—and—

"There 's Fogger!" shouted Garth, waving his arms violently on general principles, though there was little likelihood of Jim's seeing him through the window.

Oh, the wet, wet smell, and the water smacking under the gang-plank, and—

"Hello, dear people! On time!" from Jim, who was the only real thing in this curious, fascinating dream.

In the cab, while the horse's hoofs went *clip-clop* through unknown streets, Jim talked disjointedly, plainly as excited as any one.

"Blankets came," he informed his wife. "Everything 's running, more or less. How 'd you like the Sound, Pem? Elspeth, you may n't care for some of my commissary arrangements, but of course all that will straighten out. Oh, you 'll *like* it. Going to sleep, old man?"

There was maddeningly little to be seen from the cab-window. Occasional arc-lights gave garish, unnatural glimpses of silhouetted trees; all the houses were dark. The hack stopped with a jolt, and bags and Pemberleys were left on a flagged pavement, while the vehicle wheeled and trundled away into the darkness. Jim, peering closely, fitted a still unfamiliar key into the lock of a black door adorned by a fine old brass knocker. Nothing more could be seen of the house but a few feet of dim white clapboards on either side. There seemed to be trees near, with a fitful breeze among them.

"Elms," Jim explained briefly, when his son asked him if there were trees.

"I 'm 'cited," said Elspeth, in the dark hall.

Jim turned on lights here and there, and his wife cried out:

"Oh, Jim, we are indeed in luck!"

At three in the morning it is impossible to get a very comprehensive idea of a place one has never seen before, but the travelers did gain one general joyous impression of low ceilings, and gray walls, and old-fashioned furniture magnanimously left by trustful owners, and gray homespun curtains, and brass fire-irons, and a colonial mantelpiece.

"What 's outside?" Garth demanded, going to the bow-window.

"A pleasant outlook, I tell you," Jim said.

Just now there seemed to be nothing at all: blackness, and lights that looked far away; yet what could lie between?

"After my toiling in my clumsy fashion to prepare beds," said Jim, "are n't you going to avail yourselves of 'em?"

"I keep forgetting the incredible hour," Elspeth confessed. "Of course—this instant, Garth Pemberley!"

That was queerest of all—going to bed again.

But what a duck of a room! Little and low and gray blue, with a Windsor chair and an old clothes-press, and a half-grown four-poster with sprouting posts!

How long Garth's father and mother explored and talked he didn't know; he thought it rather unfair. But presently he became aware of a sound—a sound that drew him bolt upright in bed, and then sent him to sprawl across the window-sill, listening. It was a suck, a slosh, a soft wet slapping—a sound of water against rocks, or he was a lubber! Had he lived four years on Silver Shoal without learning every noise that water on stone can make? He did not know that he breathed, listening. He raised his head and looked more closely at those lights across the darkness. One was quite near. It winked clear and then dim, clear and dim, clear—it was so very much like the lamp of a lighthouse that Garth scarcely saw how it could be anything else. "A pleasant outlook"—this had been an extraordinary night, altogether. "It couldn't possibly be true," said Garth solemnly to himself.

As he leaned at the window, something more amazing happened. There was the sudden

whoop of a whistle, the same deep whistle that had blown as the Sound steamer pulled out of her New York pier. Then a light detached itself from the darkness and slipped out between Garth's window and the far lamps—a gliding bow-light, then the green gleam of a starboard-light. There was the swash and beat of paddle-wheels. The Sound steamer was passing, on her way up the bay, passing, incredibly, just outside Garth's window. He watched till the stern-light was a tiny floating jewel, far off, and then he gave up and went back to bed. He lay there, shivering ecstatically at intervals, and wondering whether he 'd better go and demand of Fogger if all this was true.

"No," he decided, "it might stop the magic. If I shut my eyes tight perhaps the dream will keep on doing it."

A matter-of-fact and impartial dawn convinced him. At first, of course, he did n't know where he was. He lay with his knees humped up, staring at the gray ceiling, and the top of the clothes-press, and the window-curtain flapping. Then he sorted everything out a little more clearly, and plunged out of bed to the window. At the foot of a short, steep bank,

which sloped green under two elms, was a sea-wall; and beyond the sea-wall stretched the whole of Newport Harbor, gray and windy. From the house some wooden steps led down the bank to a long, weathered pier. "*Our* pier!" Garth murmured in rapture. To right and left other piers projected from the lawns of other houses, and skiffs and launches bobbed at anchor. Opposite, across the channel, was the square lighthouse on the end of Goat Island. It was so near that Garth could see the keeper's dinghy moored in an angle of the jetty, and the curtain blowing from a window.

He could not wait to discover anything more. He fled to tell his parents that it was all true, and beg them to look out and see for themselves. But, arrived in the hallway, he found himself in a totally strange house, and knew not where to find his father and mother. So, being more excited than he knew, and tired still, he leaned against the wall and wept for joy and vexation both. A white door opened, and a pajamaed Fogger loomed up and bore him off to the security and delight of a full-grown four-poster, and to Mudder, who was half awake and just beginning to understand his whispered raptures about the "pleasant outlook."

The old house sat with its door-stone projecting into the flagged sidewalk of Washington Street. Most of the other houses did, too; they were gray and white and very sedate. Not one of them was built of marble, as Garth discovered when he came out upon the step to survey new surroundings by the light of early morning. Though the front doors of the houses gave upon the street, they turned a shoulder on it and looked to the harbor over their little lawns. The cross-streets, as soon as they had circumspectly made their juncture with Washington, turned themselves into steep, cobbled streetways with boats pulled up on skids; then plunged straight into water that rose and fell over weed-grown paving. Such a streetway lay just outside the northern windows of the little white house that the Pemberleys now called their own.

In the dining-room within the low vine-covered ell the new tenants ate their first much interrupted breakfast—interrupted by almost constant gazings from the harbor windows.

"*Co-nan-i-cut,*" Garth read from the side of a squat craft paddling into view. "Well, she 's a fat old one, is n't she?"

"She 's the Jimtown ferry," his father ex-

plained; "Jamestown, I should say. That 's on Conanicut Island, yonder. See the War College, Pem? That maroonish-colored dome, up the bay? There 's the *Constellation,* at anchor; *she* fought in the War of 1812, she did."

"A frigate?" cried Garth, "a square-rigged ship? Is she? Did she? Where?"

"Hi! Don't go out through the window," Jim counseled. "We 'll go and see her some day."

And meanwhile Elspeth ran back and forth, laughing, trying to find napkins, and something better to eat eggs with than tablespoons.

Surely it was too good to be true! Early spring flowers were opening on the slope that dropped downward to the water; young gulls sat creaking on the pier rail; the harbor gleamed gray beyond, to where Conanicut showed a long strip of hazy purple; still beyond, the mainland lifted a thin line of fainter blue.

Dear Joan [wrote Garth almost at once, to his aunt], O, O, it is right on the harbor!! Our own peir sticking out into it and a lighthouse opsit, and because it was such a wonderful suprise is why Fogger was so misterious! The front door is on a street but my window is at the back—boats going by and

everything! You must come and see it. I did like Uncle Rob's studio but do you know what I mean after waiting so long this is sort of wonderfuller.

Then, abandoning pen and paper, he fled abruptly to the "peir," that he might have a closer view of a lumber-schooner coming in.

Joan, reading the scrawl later in the New York apartment that seemed somehow very empty now, felt that the harbor house must be, indeed, "sort of wonderfuller."

CHAPTER XIV

MISS ESTHER ROBINSON

IT was hard to spare Jim all day and every day. He usually contrived, however, to come home for lunch and steal time to smoke a pipe afterward. When the first confusion of unpacking was over, the days settled into a comfortable routine. Because of the spring term at St. Hubert's which Garth was missing, his mother fell into the way of reading to him at definite times, or sending him off to the bow-window with a list of sums. Being the wife of a naval officer, she found, involved a number of social duties and pleasures; while she called at the naval stations, Garth fished off the pier, or, at low tide, made "crab-museums" below the sea-wall.

That no boat lay at that pier, not even so much as a skiff, filled Garth with regret. He decided that a person ought n't to expect to have *everything,* but he could n't help thinking of the *Ailouros* sometimes. When, one morn-

ing, he found a little stray boat butting her nose at the very steps of their own pier, he did wish she had come to stay. No oars were in her, and her mooring-rope—with a small wooden buoy on it—streamed untidily beside her, fouled with eel-grass. Garth scrambled down the steps and made her fast to the pier. While he sat looking at her, and wondering whose she was, and whether he and Fogger might take *one* row in her, he heard a voice hailing him vigorously.

"Good morning! I see thee 's caught my boat for me!"

Garth had heard that Quakers said "thee" and "thou" to one, but he had never been so addressed, and turned about hastily to see the speaker. It was a middle-aged lady who was standing up in another rowboat off the end of the pier. She wore a jumper and a salty blue denim skirt, and she was shading her brown face with her hand. Garth liked her instantly.

"Is she yours?" he called. "She was trying to climb up our steps."

The lady sat herself down on the thwart without more ado, and pulled stoutly for the pier. As the nose of her rowboat slid by the steps and threatened to bump the other, she leaned

over and stretched out a tanned arm to Garth.

"Does thee mind catching hold, young man?" she said briskly; "that 's it! She broke her moorings in the little blow last night and went off visiting. I did n't moor her myself, and that 's the trouble, I dare say. I 've just arrived at my house for the summer, and Mr. Jones put off the boats and moored them with his usual thoroughness."

"Which is your house, and who is Mr. Jones?" Garth asked, holding the gunwale of the rowboat.

"Perhaps thee 'd like to row down with me and help moor the boats, and I 'll show thee which my house is," said the lady. "Thee can walk back in one minute, by Washington Street."

That was an invitation which needed no repetition, and Garth was very soon in the stern of the rowboat, with the skiff's painter in his hand.

"Mr. Jones is the queerest old fellow," the lady explained, pushing off with a well-aimed thrust of her oar. "He 's supposed to put your boats off, and mend your pier and your seawall, and plant your garden, and put up your

shutters; but sometimes he does things and sometimes he does n't. Has thee lived here long? I don't believe I know thy name."

Garth told her his name and a good deal more, and in exchange the lady informed him that she was Esther Robinson. She also told him that she did n't, as a rule, say "thee" to every one she met in a day's rowing, but that somehow he had struck her at once as a person who would appreciate the Friendly speech.

"I like it very much indeed," Garth assured her earnestly. "Please do."

By this time they had passed the intervening piers and slid in among the high green piles of the Robinson wharf. The mooring of both boats required much slipping and scrambling and splashing—it being high tide with a ground-swell coming in from outside—but finally Garth and Miss Robinson stood upon the pier looking down with satisfaction at the bobbing boats before they turned away. Garth had seen this old house from the other side; it was fine early colonial, gray and gambreled, but from the street you saw only the double Dutch door with its knocker, and the dignified front windows. From the pier you could see the big, windy

piazza with the well at its corner, and the quaint kitchen ell, and the flagged walk that led past the boat-house to the sea-wall.

Garth could n't stay, because he suddenly thought that his mother might be wondering what had become of him; so he left Miss Esther Robinson on her windy porch.

"I 'm coming very soon to see thy father and mother," she assured him, the oars over her shoulder; "and perhaps some evening thee 'll come to see me—all of you, perhaps."

Miss Robinson was as good as her word. She came rapping a double knock at the Pemberleys' door one twilight—hatless, after the good informal Point fashion; dressed all in crisp white that made her fine face look the browner and her clear, kind eyes more blue. And she liked the Pemberleys so much that she urged them to visit her very soon. As for the Pemberleys, what well-springs did they not find in this new friend, of high thought and wide-flung sympathy. Where Garth saw only a kind and simple lady whose nautical tastes distinctly fitted with his own, his parents discovered a spirit devoted to many splendid causes, a woman whose pen was equally capable of writ-

ing a thoughtful sonnet or a deeply probing appeal for justice to her fellow-men. As she sat with them, her quick brown fingers knotting intricately the strands of a lanyard she was making, the talk flashed over many a complex problem, and Miss Robinson unconsciously revealed that she was indeed an active worker in the world. But, with keen understanding, she could include Garth, too, in the conversation, and paused to explain to him the knots she made, which he strove vainly to copy with an ill-assorted collection of strings.

That first impression of her house, some nights later, was all shadowy and mysterious and wonderful. Only an oil-lamp burned in the square gray hall, where ancient leathern fire-buckets swung from an angle of the stair. A lamp, too, lit the big, low living-room, where they lingered only long enough to mark the great six-foot fireplace bordered with storied tiles, and the polished Queen Anne chairs ranged against dark paneling. For the piazza seemed to summon so peremptorily that there they all went to sit and face the ever-fascinating harbor. The last of afterglow had died behind Conanicut; the sputter of a distant launch made

the only sound, except the lap of water at the sea-wall. The lighthouse opposite served to remind every one of Silver Shoal, about which Miss Robinson was as eager to hear as the Pemberleys were to tell.

Presently, somehow, the evening demanded song, as places and times will, and Miss Esther Robinson brought out a golden guitar and to it sang ballads in a crooning contralto. To Garth's delight and amazement she knew some of Jim's sea-songs, and hummed an alto to them as she plucked an accompaniment for his swinging baritone. Then some one saw the high stern-light of the Sound steamer slipping behind Goat Island, and departure was postponed until she should leave Newport and come past through the channel. She whistled as she left Long Wharf; first her bow-light gleamed out, then the whole great glittering bulk of her loomed past like a living band of gems. The still harbor was stirred by the measured thrash of her paddles; there was a faint swirl of music from on board. She made the close turn past the lighthouse and dwindled slowly, a golden diadem, beyond Rose Island.

The guitar was put to bed; too much harbor air didn't agree with it. Garth, too, must

be put to bed, his mother declared. He broke out with an involuntary "Oh, *no!*" so hasty and so sincere that it made every one laugh.

"Though we all feel the same way," Jim agreed.

Miss Esther Robinson said they must come again. Looking back, they saw her smiling in her open door, with the orange lamplight behind her shining on the straight-backed hall chairs and the graceful turn of the gray balustrade.

It was not until the next time he went to see Miss Robinson that Garth really saw the fascinating old house. That time he was invited to tea—just Garth, by himself. Tea meant supper, but he arrived rather early, and long sunlight lay across the floors. From talking about a schooner-model in the south room, which first caught Garth's eye, Miss Robinson fell to unfolding many an interesting tale. She showed him the most curious things: a box to hold different sorts of tobacco, with a long horn spoon to stir toddy; and India china, and queer coral, and a great iron chest with a key a foot long and heavy as a cannon-ball. The things had been always in the house, and the house had

belonged always to Robinsons, so it was rather exciting.

"One thing," Miss Robinson said, "is n't here that ought to be—the very thing we should most like to have. And that 's a silver coffee-service that General Rochambeau sent to my ancestors, after the Revolution. He received some kindness at Friend Robinson's hands during the time he was quartered in Newport, and sent it when he 'd gone back to France. It was pretty nice of him, I think. That silver was in the family for two generations after that, and what became of it then nobody knows."

"*What* a pity!" Garth said.

Miss Robinson agreed that it was indeed a pity, but Garth thought that at any rate a great many curious and interesting things were left. Why, those tiles around the fireplace would have claimed an hour, themselves!

"Thee sees," Miss Robinson said, "this used to be the kitchen long ago; that accounts for the size of the fireplace. There was a brick oven and a turnspit and all. These were the slave quarters, and, when later generations remodeled the old house, all that was changed about. But here 's something that *would* in-

terest thee, Garth, I think. Come in here a minute.''

She led the way into the south room, where there was a jolly collection of oars and charts and field-glasses and books. It was a curiously paneled room, and in one corner of it was a supporting post half built into the wall.

''Put thy ear close to that,'' ordered Miss Robinson. ''I 'll go to the other side.''

Garth, not knowing at all what to expect, laid his ear against the wood and listened. Miss Robinson had left the room; all was still. Then he heard her voice, very close to him.

''Does thee hear me?''

''Yes!'' shouted Garth.

''Thee does n't need to speak so loud,'' he was told.

''Don't I?'' he said.

''Still less,'' the voice commanded.

''Where are you?'' he asked, almost in a whisper.

''Ah-ha!'' said Miss Robinson.

Then there was silence again. In a moment she rejoined him.

''It 's a hollow whispering-post, thee sees,'' she explained. ''I was in the dining-room.

They say that the master used to get up now and then in the evening and put his ear to the post to hear if the slaves were plotting any mischief. It 's rather fun, is n't it?"

Fun? Indeed Garth thought so. Such a house!

"While I was in the dining-room I found that tea was ready," Miss Robinson said; so in they went.

The dining-room fronted upon the street, and beyond its curtained windows you could see the shade of elms on the flagging, and the heads of passing sailors, and of little running urchins ready to splash into the water at the end of the streetway. Within, the light of a student-lamp threw a mild glow over brown paneling, a gleam on the scroll-topped shell-cabinet and the tall grandfather's clock that cast a gentle benediction over the room from its worn golden face. The supper was very good, and somehow wonderfully different: milk tea, and something delicious in little bake-dishes that were shaped like fishes with curly tails. Afterward Miss Robinson said:

"Would thee like to take a little row, I wonder?" as if she thought his answer could be anything but an enthusiastic, "Oh, *yes!*"

"Will thee wait just a minute, while I put on my jumper? If thee likes, thee can carry the oar-locks down to the pier. I 'll bring the oars. We 'll need only one pair—unless thee 'd like to row, too?"

Garth would very much like to row, too. So he carried a pair of oars and the oar-locks down to the pier, stumbling over things in the dusk that was almost darkness. He untied the painter of the little rowboat, and in a minute Miss Robinson joined him, with the other oars across her shoulder. She wore her jumper, with its sleeves well turned up.

At the dark, slippery steps, Garth had to swallow his pride.

"Do you mind helping me on board?" he said.

Somehow, now that he was so much more nearly an "A.B.," it was harder for him to ask for help than when he had been more obviously in need of it. It puzzled him sometimes. Jim could have told him why, but he had never asked. Just now the combination of darkness, sliminess, and an oscillating boat was really too much for him. Miss Robinson jumped him in, and he scrambled to the bow thwart. She pushed off from the shadowy pier, and they

settled to their oars. At his second stroke Garth "caught a crab" and almost went over backward, to his infinite disgust. A year and a half out of a boat was his excuse, and Miss Esther Robinson seemed to think it a very good one.

They pulled out among the anchored launches and cat-boats that tilted and creaked drowsily off the piers, and rowed on toward the outer harbor. The little boat lifted to the light swell like a buoy, and smacked her way merrily enough. They passed close under the light-house, and lay beside the path of the *Conanicut* in order to catch the waves of her wake, which bobbed the rowboat about in fine fashion.

"Thee likes every bit of this sort of thing, does n't thee," Miss Robinson said, breaking a silence that had lasted all the way out.

Then she spied a floating board, and there began a fascinating search for more driftwood to feed the great Robinson fireplace. It involved many cries of "Port!" and "Starboard a little!" the bumping of the boat against drifting timbers, and the hauling in of the prize dripping over the gunwale to thump down on the growing pile in the bow. (Later Garth was to enjoy the result of this chase—on some cool

evening when the Pemberleys sat about Esther Robinson's hearth; no light in the low room but the ripple of the vivid salt flames, no sound but the mellow plucking of the guitar and the purr of the burning driftwood.)

Garth and Miss Robinson rowed in very lazily, and she sang about three jolly sailor-boys who were newly come from South Amerikee, and a sad little song about cockle-shells. It was altogether dark before they pulled in past the harbor-light. Lamps ashore were waking; a new moon curved above the water.

"I 'll put thee off at thy own pier," Miss Robinson said. "Pull thy port oar, child, quick!"

It is very hard to make a properly formal farewell in a rocking boat that is being held against a slippery step by one's hostess. It is not even easy to shake hands. Garth, however, managed to clutch his friend's left hand with his right.

"Good night," he said—and then, "Oh, Miss Esther Robinson, I *do* think thee is the nicest person!"

The whole remark, including the "thee," was entirely involuntary and came like a gust of wind.

"Well," she said, "just thee turn that right around, substituting Garth Pemberley for Esther Robinson!"

And he heard the splash of her oars in the dark as she pulled out from the pier. The lights of his own bow-window shone in a patch of gold across the night behind him. He was all alone there on the pier. For just a minute more he wanted to be all alone. He held on to the splintery rail of the pier and looked into the dark wetness, from which came little splashy noises.

"Oh, I 'm awf'ly, awf'ly happy, I think!" said Garth, to Newport Harbor in general.

Then there was the creak of a board, and Fogger's voice called:

"Ahoy! Did I hear a boat at this landing?"

"Me, sir," said Garth.

Jim came to the end of the pier, and they stood together.

"Do you know, I was thinking of some rimes before you came in," he said, "about the Sound steamer going by."

"Go on," said Garth.

Jim threw away his cigarette. It curved downward in a little fiery arc and struck the water with a tiny hiss. Then he said:

"A moving shape of light she comes,
Casting the harbor in a dream;
Slumbrous and soft her engine drums,
We see the ghostly foam-wake gleam.

"So brief a moment, while the air
Is shaken with a cry of light
That clothes her, radiantly fair;
Her bow-wash whisper thrills the night.

"Her twinkling gold reflections slip
Among the piles of gaunt gray piers,
The vision of a fairy ship
Invoked from tales of magic years.

"A moment when her mighty stern
Half spans the fairway like a crown;
Tier upon tier her star-lights burn;
A snatch of music flutters down.

"Lo! Where she was the night is dark;
The harbor wakens from its spell;
But still about the sea-wall—hark!
Runs the last murmur of her swell."

They stood there looking at the far clustered lights, and Jim's arm was about his son. The water whispered and clucked at the anchored boats, and the pier, and the wall. Fogger's arm was very close and strong. Suddenly Garth felt happier than ever.

CHAPTER XV

MARINER'S JOY

JIM, pleasantly aware of a few days' leave, came out upon the porch where his family was gathered, and sat himself down upon the rail. He looked where his son was looking, and saw that old Mr. Jones and another man, in two skiffs, were planting a mooring, while interested owners watched and shouted from the next pier. The skiffs, neck and neck like a pair of horses, balanced between them a clumsy sort of pile-driver above which the mooring-post thrust its head, while its foot wavered a fathom under water. The skiffs were sculled frantically; the owners shrieked, "No, no! Farther north!" and the mooring was planted finally, with much ado.

"They 've got it terribly far out," Garth commented. "Look at it—it 's farther out than anybody's! After dark some launch is very apt to run their boat down, *I* should think."

"Very likely," Jim agreed. "But their boat 's an ugly engine in a box, anyway. I 've seen it. They 're putting it off from the street-way."

"Everybody 's putting their boats off," Garth sighed. "Do you suppose," he added, "that sometimes some of them will take us sailing?"

Jim knocked out his pipe and blew through it deliberately. Then he said:

"I 've bought a boat."

Garth and his mother flung at him together a look in which incredulity gave way to sheer joy. Jim nodded.

"Really. Bought and paid for."

Garth had scrambled up beside his father on the railing, and slid an arm through his.

"Where is she?" he asked. "What 's she like? What 's her name? How big is she? When can we see her? Right away? Where 's she going to be put off? When did you get her? What—"

"Avast, avast!" cried Jim. "Curiosity is a trait I never did admire."

He began slowly to refill and light the pipe. Garth cast a despairing look at his mother.

"The boat," Jim said finally, "is an old one.

I bought her very cheap from a fisherman. She is a cat-boat. She 's about as big as the *Ailouros* was. She 's not in Newport at all; there is n't anything in the market here that I cared about. She 's up yonder—'' Jim flourished an arm vaguely outward—''Plymouth way. And I thought it might be merry if you and I were to go up and sail her down. Do you suppose you can tie up a tooth-brush and an oilskin coat in a bundle by this afternoon?''

Garth was indoors almost before his father had finished speaking, but not before he had embraced Jim so wildly as nearly to upset him from his perch on the railing. Garth's voice drifted down to his parents from the window of his room.

''I 've got those already, Fogger. Is there anything else I 'll need?''

Elspeth laughed, and, putting down her sewing, went up to him.

Jim and his son left Newport rather late in the afternoon. They carried one stout, small bag; they were both clad in blue dungaree; and each carried over his arm an oilskin ''slicker.''

''I hope we 'll get out of here before either a superior officer or an inferior seaman perceives

me,'' said Jim, looking guiltily around gray street-corners.

But old Bridge Street was silent and empty; it happened that there were no bumping automobiles nor hurrying moderns abroad to break an illusion of antiquity. Quaint old gray houses with hollowed stone door-steps, huddled there, dreaming shabby little dreams of earlier and better days. Jim and Garth crossed the tracks and walked down the railroad-yard to the station, where the train waited, shooting listless spurts of steam into the air.

''But how did you *know* there was a boat in Plymouth? Will we spend a night on her? How long does it take to sail down? When did you buy her?''

So Garth's questions ran, but Jim, busily studying a partly unfolded chart, waved him aside in a detached manner, advising him to look out of the train window at Hummocks and Tiverton.

They reached Plymouth after dark, and were quite ready to tumble into bed at an inn. As Jim continued to be firm and solemn and would say nothing but ''Ah!'' Garth gave up, and their conversation had become general.

Cocks were still crowing when they stole out next morning, and the dawn shadows lay long in the streets. On the water-front, however, fishermen were stirring and sails were creaking up here and there on small boats in the basin. Jim sought out a certain wharf-house and disappeared into it, leaving Garth outside in a growing fever of impatience. Presently Jim emerged, followed to the step by a grizzled old man who chewed and talked at once and jerked a horny thumb in several confusing directions. "Yew 'll shorely find him thar!" he concluded, and Jim seemed about to follow the directions. Then he reconsidered, and stood gazing out over the cluster of boats at anchor. His eyes swept the basin vaguely yet searchingly; lighted suddenly to keen recognition; then he said quietly to Garth:

"See any boat you think I might have bought?"

Something in the tone made Garth look up quickly; there was a repressed excitement, the withholding of a secret that could not be kept much longer, something that made his heart skip and then race for a moment of breathless surmise. His eyes sought the boats swiftly, rejecting one and another—and then he saw her.

Beautiful, unmistakable, clad freshly in her new white, she lay there dreaming in a sort of grateful peace. Jim drew forth the glasses at his side and passed them silently to Garth, who focused them with a hand not altogether steady. She circled slowly as he looked, and her stern swung gradually within range of the glass. *Ailouros*—he read it half unconsciously from the fresh black letters.

"When did you guess?" Jim asked.

"I didn't guess at all," Garth said, "because I've wanted to so often." And he turned very suddenly around, because he deemed it as unmanly to shed tears of joy as of sorrow—or certainly to be seen so doing. In turning, he faced a very familiar figure hurrying down the wharf.

"Cap'n 'Bijah!" Garth cried, incredulous.

"To be sure," Jim said. "You didn't think she sailed herself down, did you? This is the way the Cap'n has been spending his annual leave. Pretty good connections, eh, Cap'n?" he added, as 'Bijah came up.

The old man hauled off his cap, and then, as Jim thrust out his hand, 'Bijah rubbed his hastily on his trousers and clasped it terrifically.

"Brung her in larst night," he beamed. "My, but she 's slick an' sma't! Don't wonder ye did n't want no other! Yessirree sir, pretty good connections!"

They moved to the edge of the wharf and stood looking out. Below them the little skiff *Cymba,* as brilliantly green as the *Ailouros* was white, bobbed at the landing-stair.

"Wal, Cap'n," said the old man. "Wal, I done the best I could with her. But I had a turble time—*turble*—riddin' her o' the trail o' thet heathen Portugee."

"She 's herself," Jim said. "I could n't have done better with her. You 've more than carried out my directions, it seems to me."

"Aw," said the Cap'n, "I jest fooled with her, odd times. Thinks I, she 's wuth it, an' they 're wuth it, and 't is a pleasure. Wal, folks, they 's all the vittles aboard of her you said, an' I reeved a new rope on the killick, an' yer blankets comed by the passles post an' I fotched 'em out to her. Wal, if ye will be off, ye will. Your tide 's jest under you now. Reckon you 're tickled, hey, Ga'th? Luck to ye!"

The good Cap'n stood waving a blue band-

anna in a large brown hand, while Jim sculled the *Cymba* out to the cat-boat. Aboard of the *Ailouros* there was indeed no trail of the "heathen Portugee." She looked as she had always looked, except that she glittered with new varnish and creaked with new ropes. Jim and Garth ran up the sail handily, all in a sort of breathless, triumphant dream. Garth, at the tiller, headed her up (as soon as his hand touched it, he found that he had not forgotten); Jim ran aft with the mooring-rope. She paid off slowly, filled away, and then like a great glorious sea-bird reached off suddenly, gathering way—come into her own once again. Jim, standing beside the mast, cried out involuntarily with a gleeful shout, and then came aft, radiant, to take the tiller.

Plymouth, warm in the new sunlight, became less astern; the clamor of harbor gulls grew, and passed, and dropped to silence. Once around Long Beach and out of the narrow channel that winds across Plymouth Harbor, the *Ailouros* caught the brisk outside wind and sprang forward joyously. Abeam, the rolling gray-green coast-line, girdled by an edge of foam, reached out fold on fold. Unfamiliar

headlands rose before—"a stern and rock-bound coast." And all this time Jim and his son had spoken no word, but had sailed their boat—theirs once more—in a deep, contented silence that only the *Ailouros* herself broke with the many sweet little familiar voices of her.

Garth pinioned a flapping chart in the bottom of the cockpit and pointed out to his father what must be White Horse Beach, and what Manomet Point; and surely yonder was the lighthouse on Mary Ann Rocks. Steering and eating; that was the main business of the day. They seemed to find it necessary to eat very frequently.

"We breakfasted so late," Jim explained, "that this may be the end of breakfast, or the beginning of lunch, you see."

They could n't spare time to run in and anchor and dine at leisure, so Jim, at the tiller, munched what he called "a piece in the hand," while Garth sprawled on the hatch and hewed a bakery loaf to pieces with his clasp-knife.

"I wish John Loomis was along," Garth remarked, perhaps reminded of that young man by the silver chain to which the clasp-knife was attached. "Of course, it 's kind of nicer—just you and me—but he 'd like it so much."

"Is he ever going to reappear?" Jim inquired. "I want to see him. I like mysteries."

"He said he was coming to see me when he got back," Garth said, with faith; "so he will."

"That settles it," said Jim. "Heave me another hunk of that, will you? I 'm afraid our table-manners are n't any too good, Pem. But then—there is n't any table, so we can't have 'em. Do you suppose Miss Hampton would ever consent to eat chunks of bread thrown at her?"

Garth pondered, and replied, somewhat to his father's surprise:

"I really do think she 'd like to try."

Presently he said, vehemently:

"Oh, *is n't* she the nicest thing that ever was!"

"Who, Miss Hampton?" Jim asked.

"*No,*" said Garth, turning over on his back and looking up the mast, "the *Ailouros.*"

Jim coaxed every inch from the boat that she would give, and late afternoon found her lying to at the mouth of the Cape Cod Canal. A friendly tug, going through light, picked them up and towed her at a merry pace. The canal was bare and not interesting, and being

towed was a curious, deadening sensation. Garth decided, on the instant, that he did n't want to be a bargee, ever. The *Ailouros* seemed somehow humiliated, and made little runs, now to one side, now to the other, as if to get away from the obnoxious tow-rope. The tug-captain left the wheel to his mate and came and talked to them over the stern.

"Say ye comed from Plymouth to-day?" he bawled. "Seems to me ye 've got a pretty smart little yacht there. Guess ye know how to push her, too. Where y' goin' to-night?"

"What 's good anchorage?" Jim shouted. "I want to run in for the night soon after we leave the canal."

"Ye 'll get a long channel when ye come out," the tug-master roared, "plump full o' buoys. Then ye get Wing's Neck Light—that 's fixed white—and then Bird Island; that 's a flashin'. Run up into Sippecan Harbor; ye 'll get anchorage there. Got a chart?"

Jim answered in the affirmative. The tug-captain would have none of Jim's proffered toll, when they cast off. The tug waited, sizzling, while the *Ailouros* came up alongside.

"Glad to be able to do ye a turn," he insisted, holding the cigar Jim had finally pressed on

him as though it were a stick of dynamite. "Here, fill yer pipe, friend."

He thrust out a bent package of "Mariner's Joy," black as tar, and Jim rather gingerly rammed his pipe and put it, unlit, between his teeth. Later, when the tug was a blur of smoke ahead, Jim ruefully knocked out the tobacco over the side.

"It just can't be did," he said, shaking his head regretfully. "After surviving a year of warfare on the high seas, I don't want to be felled in my prime by a pipeful of Mariner's Joy."

And now there was to be something for which Garth had always longed, a night on the boat. It had never been possible during the Silver Shoal days, for Jim was obliged to be on duty all night, within reach of his great lamp. Now it was for others to light and tend the beacons that began here and there to gleam out after the sunset. Twilight was settling swiftly, blurring the shore-line and drifting purple across the water. It was time to light up, too, aboard the *Ailouros*. Her little running-light, green on one side and red on the other, shone out suddenly as Jim shielded a precariously flickering match, one arm around the mast. He

lit, too, the cockpit lantern and spread the chart beside it, while Garth steered.

Garth lay back with one arm hooked over the tiller and steered by an early star. He kept it over the mast and lay looking at it with drowsy contentment—just the pale violet-gray sky, and the peak of the sail, and the faint white star with the mast pointing always to it as the *Ailouros* responded to his touch. That was the way to sail—on and on forever—He would steer the Ship of Dreams by a star always after this. But Jim raised his head and peered over the coaming, then folded up the chart.

"Let 's have her, old man," he said.

He altered the course, ran down before the slackening wind until a few lonely house-lamps on shore shone closer, then luffed up sharply, looking out beyond the shadowy sail.

"This may or may not be Ancoot Cove," he said. "Anyway, it 'll do, meseemeth. Hold her up, Pem, while I go for'ard."

His investigation apparently satisfied him, for in a moment there was the splash of the anchor and the swift rasp of the cable running out. The sail came down, all ghostly, suddenly revealing a patch of stars that it had hidden behind its dim expanse.

There is something mysterious about a boat at night. It is hard to tell where boat stops and water begins, what is night sky and what unseen sail. A figure stepping beyond the ring of lantern-light seems to have stepped overboard and to have been swallowed by unrippled darkness. The sound of water comes from strange places, below and above and within. Garth felt somehow awed in the presence of an *Ailouros* so strange to him, and was glad when his father materialized again from the bow and stood with an arm over the boom, smiling down at him.

"The fisherman," Jim said, "suggested that we have her towed down from Quimpaug by a steam trawler. Was n't that a nice idea?"

Garth generally tried to wither his father with deeply reproachful looks when he was guilty of such a speech as this. He did so now, and Jim said:

"I *thought* you 'd think it was jolly. How about food?"

They shielded a very surly can of solidified alcohol behind a tarpaulin, and coaxed its blue and flaring flame to heat a can of baked beans. These they ate on large chunks of the second loaf of Plymouth bread, with extreme relish,

and finished their meal with a cake of chocolate equally divided. They both felt hugely elated over this supper somehow, which, eaten at home, would hardly have satisfied them, and they beamed at each other and at the *Ailouros* in entire content. The tin can, with an apology to Poseidon, Jim hurled overboard; hence there were no dishes to wash.

"Mudder should learn to employ such methods," Jim commented, filling his pipe.

But it seemed to each of them the most perfect moment of all, when, having put on their sweaters, they rolled themselves up in their blankets and lay side by side in the cockpit. Jim, raising himself on one elbow, blew out the lantern. Then there was nothing but the masthead-light, passing slowly like a great yellow planet among the stars as the *Ailouros* lifted and swung. The water noises were very close—just below their ears—the eternal soft sucking, now and then a hollow smack. Sometimes one constellation hung above them, sometimes another, as the boat shifted at her mooring. And then they slept, Garth's hand in Jim's; and the *Ailouros,* awake all night, rose and fell and rose again, very quietly, on dark, unknown water.

Dawn revealed their harbor, flat and gray in the first light, with rolling hills—gray, too—meeting it, and two farmhouses sending up small blue wraiths of smoke from new-lit fires. Jim shook off his blankets, blew out the riding-light, and, casting away his clothes, dived over the stern for a glorious, chilly, morning plunge. Garth did not wake until his father, hair dripping, was lacing his sneakers, one foot propped on the centerboard housing.

"You might have woke me," Garth protested drowsily. "I might have wanted to."

"You *might* have," Jim said, rather skeptically. "Up with you, now, at all events, and lend a hand with this mystic fire-worshiper rite."

Breakfast was a complete success. The frying-pan was scientifically washed over the side, and Jim got up the sail to a vociferous chantey about a poor old man and his horse, which seemed incoherent but effective. Up anchor—down helm—the *Ailouros* was off like a bird, with the promise of a fair wind on her quarter and a jolly freshening sea running beside her.

"A blessing on the old boat," said Jim. "She always did bring fair winds and favorable

tides, did n't she. Drag out your chart, pilot, and let 's have the course."

That night brought them well on to Westport, but it was not until noon of the next day that any familiar landmarks hove in sight. Then the red and white tower of Saconnet Light showed up to starboard, and they presently rounded Sachuest Point, seeing abeam the long lovely sweep of the Second Beach, with emerald water breaking in swift lines of foam and the Paradise Rocks standing up somber and purple beyond. Before they made the light-ship it came on to blow, and Jim took in a reef. They also put on their slickers, and stowed all perishables under the hatch.

"We 'll have to beat every inch of the way in," Jim said.

"Hurray!" cried Garth.

"All right! We 'll be in the dark, cold, *and* wet, before we get through; but we can't grumble after the luck we 've had."

Jim was right. The *Ailouros* whacked her way through ever-mounting seas, nor spared her occupants in the least. Every time she wallowed into a wave she doused them with a gallon or so of cold water. The sun backed swiftly

down behind Conanicut, leaving them in a sudden gray dusk out of which a frigid wind whistled. None of this served to cloud their spirits in the least, and their exultation grew with the size of the waves. At last the *Ailouros* beat around Newport Light and slid into the quieter water of the inner harbor.

"Keep her headed for our library light," Jim commanded as he relinquished the tiller, "while I go and try to grab the mooring."

Elspeth, who was on the piazza beginning to feel just a little anxious, saw the running-light swing in and stop, and heard sundry clankings and creakings from the water. Her lantern bobbed down the pier, and she was immediately hailed by her returned sailors.

"Does Mudder know?" Garth asked Jim.

"By the great jib-boom, she does n't! Unless she 's guessed!" Jim exclaimed.

"What boat is that?" Elspeth cried.

For answer, Garth hung the cockpit lantern over the stern, so that its light fell on the black letters.

"Can you read it?" he shouted.

After a moment of straining silence, she called back:

"I think I must need spectacles, or something! I can't make it anything but *Ailouros!*"

The delighted laughter of her son reached her across the water.

She waited in the dark, hearing the sail come down, seeing the running-light go out and the lantern swing over the side. Then there was the quick low splash of oars, a glow-worm light moving nearer, and the *Cymba* bumped the steps. Elspeth was clasped against wet, sticky oilskins, and received salt and violent kisses. Everybody talked, and a confusion of blankets and biscuit-boxes and oars and wet things was bundled on to the pier.

Garth tried to tell his mother every detail of the entire cruise in five minutes, and fell asleep in the middle of it, over a steaming cup of chocolate. He did n't know exactly how he got to bed, but there he was. From his pillow he saw Arcturus shining over the flagpole of the next pier, and hazily imagined he was steering his bed by it. But in less than no time the bed had to pilot itself, for Garth was sleeping the sleep of the weary and contented mariner.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WHISPERING-POST

IT was the next evening, when the cruise was still the only thing to talk of, and every one had a tendency to keep looking out of the window to be sure that the *Ailouros* was really there. Garth was explaining things to his mother, with the chart extended over the sewing on her lap, when there came a rapping at the outer door.

"It might be Miss Robinson," Elspeth said. "She uses the knocker. Will you go, Jim?"

Jim went. At the door, illumined by the light from the hall, stood a young man with a brown face and a hopeful expression. He wore a rather shabby blue suit and a tropical grass hat.

"Well, as I live!" he cried genially, with a slow, charming smile; "you 're Fogger!"

Jim could n't deny it; neither could he help looking somewhat taken aback. Then light dawned upon him.

"I 'll stake my pay I know who *you* are!" he said. "Garth was right. You 're John Loomis, and you 've come back!"

By this time Garth himself was on the scene and Elspeth hurrying forward. Garth and Loomis were the only people who seemed not at all surprised.

"You see," Loomis explained, "I went to your place in New York, and there Mr. Sinclair said you 'd gone. He told me where, so I came."

It all seemed very simple, certainly. Loomis smiled happily. He was surely less thin and pale. He wore a band of silver about his left wrist, that gleamed as he turned his tropical hat about in his hands.

"Where are you staying?" Jim asked. As Loomis had no luggage with him, Jim presumed he had left it somewhere.

"I don't know," the young man said, as though such an idea had not occurred to him until that moment. "I just came from the station, you see."

"You must stay with us," said Elspeth decisively.

"Of *course,*" Garth added.

"That 's ever so good of you," Loomis said. "May I? You can't think how much I 've wanted to see you all. I don't know; it helps, somehow."

"Helps what?" said Elspeth.

"Helps," Loomis repeated. He seemed to be struggling with an idea. "Having friends helps one—does n't it?"

"But you have friends," Elspeth reminded him. She was thinking of Wyeth Merriman's friends.

"No, not any," he said, rather wistfully. "And one does n't make them down there. It was fun, though. Garth, I 'll have to tell you some day what fun it was."

"I want you to," said Garth.

"Upon my word, he more than fills my expectations," Jim told his wife much later that evening, as he fastened window-catches and put out lights. "It turned out he *had n't* any luggage; it just did n't exist. It 's on some South American freighter, or somewhere equally accessible. He accepted my pongee pajamas and my other razor gratefully. He apologized gently for his clothes—said he really had meant

to get a suit in New York, but when he came away from Bob's he was so anxious to get here that he forgot it."

"Probably he has n't money enough, anyway," Elspeth said. "Celia says he has lots —in his own name—but there seems to be no way of getting at it without immense coil, and she keeps hoping he 'll come back to himself and be able to get it."

"And meanwhile he 's been living from hand to mouth," Jim mused. "Queer as the deuce. But the chap is charming, somehow. I wanted to sort of tuck him in and tell him it was going to be all right. Yet—well, I never saw such a curious mixture of complete composure and competency, with a wistful and childish helplessness."

"We simply must keep him here, Jim," Elspeth said, "and see what we can do. I suppose we ought to ask Celia down presently and try to untangle things. If only she 'll have restraint enough to keep still. It 's awfully hard on her. She 's really quite a little brick, you know—loyal as she can be."

"Do you suppose," Jim asked reflectively, as he paused at the foot of the stairs, "that our

friend John has enough money to buy himself so much as a tooth-brush?''

At first Jim was a little loath to entrust his son and the *Ailouros* to Loomis's care, but one sail convinced him that however vague the man might be about his baggage, he could certainly handle a boat. Garth admired him, and he loved Garth, so Jim went off to the Torpedo Station with mind tolerably at rest. It was surely no trouble to entertain their guest. Sailing was all he wanted to do, and as Garth fell in perfectly with his wishes they were both content. Jim and Elspeth joined them whenever it was possible, and sometimes they included Miss Esther Robinson in the party.

This lady was charmed by Loomis, as no one failed to be, and many an evening he and one or more Pemberleys spent on her broad, pleasant piazza or in her dim, delightful living-room. Loomis had acquired some white trousers and rajah silk shirts, and he did look very handsome, with his brown face and wide-set dark eyes, and his fine hands with the gleam of the silver circlet at his wrist. He told Garth that an old Indian gave him that because he fished the old man out of a pit where his en-

emies had put him; but how Loomis had come to be mixed up in such doings he could n't or would n't say. It all seemed to be a part of the "fun" he 'd had "down there."

Of course he was shown the whispering-post. Garth never failed, at each visit to Miss Robinson, to lay his ear against that remarkable corner, just on general principles. He had lingered behind, on this particular evening, to listen at it in the darkness of the south room, while the grown-ups were extending their leave-taking in the hall.

"Come along, Pem!" Fogger called to him.

He came only to the doorway, when he responded, and he looked triumphant and excited.

"I heard clinkings in there," he announced; "ghost ones, in the post. I *knew* it was magic, and something would happen."

"You heard what?" several voices inquired.

"Clinkings," Garth replied; "soft little ones."

"Nonsense," said Elspeth; "it 's time you went to bed."

"Thee must have heard Martha putting away the silver up-stairs," said Miss Robinson. "The sound might very well come down through the post."

"That was it, I fear," said Jim. "Too bad your spooks are exorcised so speedily, Pem."

Garth looked rather disappointed; and just then it was noticed that John Loomis had vanished. He came back in a moment from the south room, and it was evident from his expression of gentle solemnity that he was taking the ghosts seriously.

"There *are* clinkings," he said, "and creaks."

"This old house makes the most curious squeaks and creaks at times as it warps and swells in the fog," Miss Esther Robinson assured him.

"It could n't clink," said Loomis gravely.

"Mice in the partition," Jim said.

"Mice could n't clink," Loomis persisted.

"It was like little tinklings," Garth said; "was n't it?"

"Yes," Loomis agreed.

"It was most certainly Martha," Miss Robinson said. "The silver is kept at night in a closet above the dining-room. We must try some day and see if it does n't sound down the post. Martha!" she called, stepping to the foot of the stairs; "Martha, is thee there?"

There was no reply; the old house was completely still.

"She must have gone on up to bed immediately," Miss Robinson said. "I 'll ask her in the morning."

She smiled heartily at them all from the door-stone. When she returned to her hall she hesitated, and then could not resist going into the dark, silent south room and putting her ear to the whispering-post. All was utterly quiet; there was not a sound until a boat in the harbor broke the silence with her whistling.

"Those boys certainly have very good imaginations!" laughed Miss Esther Robinson as she went up her gray stairs.

But the next morning she was rapping at the Pemberleys' brass knocker. Garth had seen her coming along Washington Street, and opened the door to her.

"Does thee know," she began at once, "it 's surely very funny. Martha put away the silver right after tea last night, and went up to her room immediately to do some mending. Is thee perfectly sure, Garth, thee heard that little sound?"

"Perfectly," said Garth. "So 's John Loomis."

"Then it must be mice, as thy father said."

"But, as John Loomis said," Garth insisted, "mice could n't tinkle—unless they were fairy-tale ones with bells around their necks."

"That 's unlikely," said Miss Robinson.

However, Garth and Loomis returned with her and spent half the morning hooting through the post, jingling Miss Robinson's silverware about in different rooms, and coming to no more satisfactory conclusion than ever. The post would not clink for them itself, no matter how long they waited; so they went home to lunch, and put forward a hundred idle and impossible conjectures as they sailed out to Castle Hill that afternoon.

When they returned, tousled and slightly wet—for they had had to beat back—they found a pretty lady in a lavender organdie dress, sitting with Elspeth on the piazza. It was Celia Hampton, and, as on another momentous day a year ago, they were sipping iced tea.

"Just in time; you look hot," said Elspeth. "Celia, you 've met Mr. Loomis. John, I 'm sure you remember Miss Hampton?"

"Of course," said Loomis, looking grave and careful. "We 've met before, have n't we?"

"Oh, yes," said Celia, gallantly, "at Mr. Sin-

clair's studio—such a hot day, just before you sailed off to the tropics."

"I mean—before that," Loomis said.

The color swept into Celia's startled face.

"I—why—I think we may have. In Cleveland?" she hazarded. "Were n't you in Cleveland?"

"I don't know where," Loomis said. "Yes, thank you, I will have some tea. Please forgive our being so grubby—boats are such nice messy things. Do you like them, Miss Hampton?"

"I 'm going to learn all about them," said Celia, still a little dazed from the moment that had just hovered and passed. "You and Garth must teach me. I 've really never had a chance to like them. I—you will, won't you?"

Garth was not overwhelmed with joy at the idea of the dainty Miss Celia's being added to their expeditions, but she did seem very much in earnest. Loomis apparently had nothing to say, and so Garth answered for him.

"Of course we will; oh, you 'll like it. That is, if you really don't mind getting wettish and all blown to pieces."

"You don't need to take her on such very violent sails, dear," Elspeth suggested, jig-

gling the pitcher of tea to hear whether or not any ice remained.

"I sha 'n 't mind anything," Celia said resolutely. "I shall like it *all*."

Elspeth, watching her eyes as they sought Loomis's impassive face, believed that she would.

CHAPTER XVII

CELIA SAILS

ESTHER ROBINSON had heard the strange tale of Celia and Loomis, and she was very eager to help entertain "those poor young people," as she called them. This resulted in her asking the entire Pemberley household to tea with her. Such sudden large additions to her family seemed never to trouble Miss Robinson in the least. Her hospitable old house was frequently filled with batches of nieces and nephews and appreciative guests who came and went throughout the summer. Supper was laid on a great round table in an angle of the piazza, a delightful place in which to eat, with the merry accompaniment of flapping awnings and whistling boats. With the last gold of sunset behind Conanicut the breeze died away, the harbor smoothed to patterned opal and amber, and Newport Light shone out palely. A canoeful of merry young people paddled by, and

the sound of their mandolins drifted pleasantly in, softened by distance over water. Far down seaward, Beaver Tail flashed its brilliant light more and more sharply as the twilight grew.

Songs were as usual the order when darkness deepened, and, after various ditties from Jim and his hostess, Loomis, to every one's surprise, lifted up his voice and sang a strange song in an unknown tongue. Apparently it was another of the things he had acquired "down there." He had a very soft and liquid tenor, and the eery cadence of the song enchanted every one. Then Celia, with a studied carelessness, leaned forward and said:

"Do you know 'The Sally Gardens,' Mr. Loomis?"

No one else did, assuredly. Loomis knit his brow for a moment.

"Why, yes," he said slowly; "I used to sing that. Yes—now, wait a minute."

The air of "The Sally Gardens" is one of haunting, wistful pathos, with the minor croon that only the old Irish ballad has.

"'Down by the sally gardens
My love and I did meet . . ."

Loomis' sweet, soaring voice filled the listening darkness. He reached the last lines:

"'She bade me take love aisy
As the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish,
And now am full of tears. . . .'"

If Celia's tears brimmed over, only Elspeth, sitting next her, knew it.

"But have n't I—did n't I sing that for you before?" Loomis was saying, in a slightly surprised voice. "The other day—the other time . . . that other time—"

"I 've heard you sing it before," Celia ventured.

No one stirred. It seemed as though this was to be the moment when John Loomis should remember how Wyeth Merriman had sung it to her. But Loomis turned the silver bracelet round and round on his wrist and stared into the dark. Celia had perhaps grown over-cautious. She dared not urge him.

"Sing about the Bell Buoy, Pemberley," said Loomis to Jim. The moment had again passed.

As soon as Jim had finished his song, Miss Robinson spoke.

"Do any of you see a man on my pier?" she asked.

"I do," said Jim.

"Yes," several voices agreed.

"Do you think he 's come up from a boat, Mr. Pemberley?"

"Looks that way," Jim replied.

"I just ask, because I 'm very sure I saw a man there last night, and I 'd like to know what he 's doing."

"He 's walking along the sea-wall now," Garth stated.

"If you 'll excuse me," said Miss Robinson, "I believe I 'll go down there and ask if he knows it 's a private pier."

"I 'll ask him that," said Jim, and was down the steps soundlessly before Miss Robinson had risen. He came back very soon.

"He 'd gone," said Jim. "He must have nipped across the streetway pretty speedily. Did you see him come out past the boat-house?"

"He never came out past the boat-house," said Loomis.

"Well, he is n't behind it now," Jim declared; "he must have. It 's too dark to be sure, Loomis."

"Did you see his boat, Mr. Pemberley?" Miss Robinson inquired.

"It may have been under the pier," Jim said. "I could n't be sure."

"Well," said Miss Robinson, "I really think he might land at the skid in the street-way instead of at my pier, if he 's going in that direction anyway."

As they were leaving, Garth exhibited the whispering-post to Celia.

"Only fancy!" she exclaimed, obediently putting an ear to it. "How amusing! And does it always make those curious little sounds to itself? How uncanny of it!"

"What sounds?" Garth said.

"The little tinkling noise."

Several heads were immediately inclined toward the post, but it was completely still.

"It 's stopped, now," Celia said. "Or perhaps I imagined it."

"I think you did!" Jim agreed laughing.

Garth and Loomis took Celia for a sail, according to agreement. She arrayed herself in the most appropriate clothes her wardrobe-trunk contained, but Garth, holding the *Cymba*

against the steps of the pier, looked frowningly upon her white serge skirt and suède pumps.

"It 's a shame to mess up your good clothes," he said. "No matter *how* carefully you start off, you always get sloppy before the end."

Celia could make no reply because she was caught in the perilous position of having one foot on a slimy step and the other on the edge of a lurching boat.

"Don't step on the gunwale—*wait!*" Garth shouted, and Loomis rescued the lady bodily from a ducking.

"Shall I sit here in the back?" she asked, somewhat shaken by the doubly terrific experience of nearly falling into the water and of having Loomis's arms about her.

Garth, who did not forget that this expedition was in the nature of a lesson, corrected her at once.

"Not the back—the stern," he explained. "Yes, *do* sit there, right away."

Celia felt that the *Ailouros,* when they reached her, was a much safer and more substantial craft than the skiff. She leaned back and gave herself up to watching Loomis's quick, certain movements as he went about get-

ting up the sail. It gave her both joy and anguish to watch him. There was comfort in seeing unchanged certain characteristic turns of the hand and attitudes of the body. When he threw his dark hair from his forehead with a sudden impetuous motion and flung back his head to look up the mast, he was no one but Wyeth Merriman. She expected him to turn back to her with the old look kindling in his eye and her name joyously on his lips. When he did turn, to speak to Garth, his gently perplexed brown eyes were those of John Loomis.

She listened to the incomprehensible talk.

"Can you hold the peak, Garth?"

"Wait a sec; the throat 's pinching!"

"Now then, handily! Chock-a-block!"

The sail creaked up. Garth explained things hastily to Celia as they happened, and she tried very hard to understand. Once away from the buoy it seemed indeed "plain sailing." Loomis settled himself at the tiller and asked if he might smoke.

"Where shall we go?" he inquired. "Are you a good sailor, Miss Hampton?"

"I don't know; I 've never sailed, you see."

"Better not go out to the light-ship, per-

haps,'' Loomis mused. ''It 's just right for it, though. What do you think, skipper?''

Garth squinted out at the choppy blue beyond the inner harbor.

''Oh, well,'' he said, ''we might go on out that way and see.''

Loomis gave Celia a careful lesson in steering. She tried again and again to meet his eyes; surely, surely if he looked full at her he would remember.

''And some day, Celia, I 'll teach *you* to sail—'' could n't he remember saying that? No, John Loomis had never said it. Somehow his eyes always slipped past her—to the tiller, or the shore, or the sunny peak of the sail. He had looked forward to it so joyously. Yet now he was teaching her to sail; and he did n't remember.

Alas, not far beyond the Dumplings, as the sea grew Celia's pallor sank to gray; her eyes assumed a fixed and fervent expression. She was learning that she was not a good sailor. Loomis saw it, and came about and ran in toward Conanicut.

''Afraid you would n't like it outside,'' he said with gentle concern.

''When it 's so beautiful in here, why should

one go outside at all?" Celia asked, able to smile again in smoother water.

They slipped along near the lovely Conanicut shore, close enough to see the warm slopes of huckleberry and bay, and tumbled granite boulders.

"It is beautiful, isn't it?" Loomis agreed.

"Beautifuller, but not such fun," maintained Garth, who lay on the hatch, and was a little disappointed over not going outside.

They ran on to Gould Island, and, when they turned, met a stiff little squall that was just piping in from the Atlantic. The *Ailouros,* always out of temper in a head sea, splashed about more than she needed and contrived to splatter Celia thoroughly. Celia thought this must be nothing short of a hurricane, and marveled that the faces of Loomis and Garth showed no concern whatever. Since they laughed, she tried to laugh, too, and presently, to her own intense surprise, found that her laughter was no longer an echo.

"Don't you really like it?" shouted Garth, still on the hatch. "Woof!" he added, as the *Ailouros* wallowed and slatted a bucket of water completely over him.

"I—I do!" Celia shouted back, shivering with cold and fear and ecstasy.

She was still pale and very wet, but smiling, when she came up from the pier.

"*Boys!*" said Elspeth, looking at her son and Loomis with reproachful blue eyes.

"It 's all right," Celia protested. "I quite enjoyed it. And when it 's really bumpy and exciting, with water coming in, you don't have time to wonder if you feel queerish."

"Oh! Did you feel queerish?" Elspeth asked.

"I sha'n't any more," Celia said.

"Those bad people," Elspeth sighed. "I told them 'a little gentle sail, up the bay.' "

"But you never can tell what it 's going to do," Garth protested.

Jim's ideas of an introduction to sailing were perhaps more in keeping with his wife's. An evening sail—as many as the *Ailouros* would hold—with Miss Robinson and her guitar, and so soft a wind that there was scarcely a sound of water at the bow, and a great golden moon floating up over Newport. Garth sat on the hatch and lay down and hung his heels over the coaming whenever Jim sang out, "Hard a-

lee!'' This was quite often, and Miss Robinson, who also sat on the hatch, had to hop down, guitar and all, into the cockpit in the middle of a song, to avoid being plunked overboard by the boom.

But Elspeth had a fear that perhaps Celia was really only enjoying all this sort of thing for the sake of Loomis, who loved it. For that reason she tried to take Celia into the rest of Newport, to music at the Art Association, and for a drive here and there.

Above bare white ways that climbed crookedly from narrow, busy Thames Street, Newport on the hill lay bathed in the shade of dusty maples. Glittering motors flickered up and down the Avenue; occasionally a smooth-rolling victoria passed, drawn by fine, prancing horses. But not the gay modes in the little Avenue shops, nor the modest entrance of the famed Casino, nor the gigantic houses of the great, kindled any enthusiasm in Celia's face. Over smooth green lawns, beyond marble balustrades and drooping trees, burned blue vistas of the sea. Summer Newport was at its loveliest, with blue hydrangeas shining down shaded aisles, and tree-bordered streets everywhere ending in a glimpse of harbor or ocean. In

contrast to the cool and luxuriant hill, old Mill and Church streets tumbled in a glare of heat to the harbor below, between their historic houses, watched over by the pale spire of Trinity, loveliest of colonial churches.

As the gray stretch of Washington Street opened among its elms, and the *Conanicut* whistled in turning Goat Island, Celia sighed.

"It 's a quiet little corner, after the hill," Elspeth said, feeling somehow responsible and apologetic on account of the sigh.

"I was just thinking," Celia said; "it 's a different town, is n't it. A different world."

"Quite different," Elspeth agreed.

"Nice world," Celia said. "Oh, I 've lived with the other so long—the world of shops and motors and tea-parties. Don't you know Alfred Noyes's thing:

". . . We have come
Back to heaven, back to home. . . ."

The black door opened beneath its fan-light, and Garth stood on the threshold.

"Hullo!" said he. "Supper 's just ready."

Indeed, candles were lit in the dining-room, and beyond them, through the open window, was the shining golden reach of the harbor, filled with peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

A FALL AND A FIND

MISS ESTHER ROBINSON was alone again, after an influx of young relatives, and Garth, going to visit her one morning, found her mending oars. She was seated on the steps of the piazza, busily prying ancient copper tacks from their fastnesses in order to put new canvas around the middle of the oars. She set Garth to work scraping another pair with a bit of glass, and sandpapering them in readiness for a coat of varnish.

Beyond the flagged space in front of the piazza there were spires of hollyhock against the water, and trumpet-vine fingering the porch rails and tiptoeing across the first floorboards. It was in bloom where it was festooned over the old boat-house, blowing brave orange trumpets across the lawn. The air was filled with the buzzing stillness of summer sunshine. Enough wind came from the water to rattle the awning lazily.

"Now, then," said Miss Robinson, "thee might go down to the boat-house and see if thee can find the shellac. If there 's spar varnish, all the better. They 're on a little shelf opposite the door."

Garth stood his oars up beside the steps and went down to the boat-house. It was at the edge of the sea-wall, and its door faced the water. It was nearly as old as the house, and in rather poor repair. Garth fell over a loose floor-board in crossing to the shelf, and returned with the shellac, rubbing his elbow.

"Did thee hurt thyself?" Miss Robinson asked solicitously.

"No," he said, "I just tripped on a wiggly board and banged my funny-bone."

"I did n't know there was a wiggly board," Miss Esther Robinson said. "Mr. Jones must see to that."

They worked away very sociably, and finally looked with satisfaction at three pairs of neatly bound and newly varnished oars glistening in the sun as they leaned beside the well to dry.

"I 'll put away the shellac and the hammer," Garth offered, as Miss Robinson went off to wash out the sticky brushes.

He put the can back on its shelf in the boat-house, and, forgetting already about the unsafe board, turned back. He stepped upon its loose end, and suddenly half the floor seemed to rise up and slide beneath his feet, and he caught at the edge of a black hole and missed it. For a little while he was too much hurt to see where he had tumbled to, for he had wrenched his bad leg. Then he took a long breath and held on to his knee hard with both hands, and looked around. He seemed to be sitting in a small, damp cellar.

"But it 's funny for a boat-house to have a *cellar,*" he thought.

The walls—as much of them as he could see—were built of old masonry, and there were wet places on them and on the floor. Faint, dusty light fell from the hole above him and dimly illuminated the place where he sat, but he could not tell whether or no the cellar extended beyond. He stood up, with some difficulty, for his leg had a bothersome way of not obeying him—particularly just after falling down a hole—and found that the boat-house floor was above his head. He could reach the edge of it, and tried to get a toe-hold and clamber up. But again his strength

proved not enough for such gymnastic feats, and he sat down once more upon the damp floor of his prison.

For prison it certainly was. Two or three shouts convinced him that no one at the house would hear him.

"I wonder if Miss Robinson 'll think I just went home after I put away the shellac, and *never* look for me," thought Garth, rather mournfully.

It was some minutes before he bethought him that probably in that case his mother and father would come seeking his whereabouts before he altogether perished of starvation.

"Though I 'm *very* hungry, now," he reflected grimly.

Garth had begun to reach the age when a small boy carries several pounds of miscellaneous articles in his pockets. Among his inseparable possessions he numbered a flashlight, and this he now took from his trousers pocket and turned upon his dungeon. On three sides its stone walls hemmed him in; on the fourth, toward the house, there was no wall whatever, only a low, black opening. Garth sat staring at it for some time before it burst upon him with a rush of excitement that

it was the entrance to a tunnel. With his thumb firmly pressed upon the button of the flash-light, Garth arose and entered the tunnel.

It was just high enough to let him walk upright, with occasional duckings of his head. It was narrow, and damp, and very moldy-smelling. Once or twice he almost turned back, but then he very sensibly reflected that as there was but one passage he could n't very well get lost, and that it was quite unlikely that there were dragons, pirates, or anything like that at the other end. The tunnel suddenly took a run upward and stopped at a ladder-like flight of stairs, so narrow that any one broader than Garth would have had to go up sideways. The walls were no longer of stone but of wood, and the air was so hot and musty that it nearly choked him.

Garth climbed upward cautiously, and suddenly the light flickered across something that flashed and shimmered and twinkled. Garth stared, while the electric flash-light, its battery exhausted, winked feebly and died. Then he sat down in a heap, partly because his leg would do no more, and partly for wonder at what he had seen. As he sat there with the

dead flash-light in his hand, he heard a voice singing, close to his ear.

"We are three jolly, jolly sailor-boys,
And we 're newly come from South Amerikee. . . ."

CHAPTER XIX

THE SECRET OF THE STAIR

MISS ESTHER ROBINSON, who had been making herself tidy for luncheon, came briskly down to the south room to see whether or not her young guest would stay and lunch with her. Not finding him in the living-room, on the porch or pier, she concluded that he had gone home, impatient of waiting longer for her. She turned back from the glass doors that led to the piazza, and went to look at the barometer that hung beside the whispering-post.

"We are three jolly, jolly sailor-boys," hummed Miss Robinson, as she saw that it marked "set fair."

Then, although she was a courageous and not at all a nervous lady, she leaped back from the wall as though a revolver had been leveled at her from it. For from some indefinite place came terrific thumpings, and a voice which cried out:

"Miss—Esther—Robinson!"

She had no difficulty whatever in recognizing the voice.

"Why, Garth, where is thee?" she cried, her composure decidedly shaken.

"In here!" the voice returned distinctly if indefinitely. "A secret place! There 's treasure and jewels and everything!"

Miss Robinson, who fancied he must be playing a pirate game, ran out upon the porch and in at the door of the little back entry which lay next to the south room. There bicycles and boat-lanterns and rope and garden-tools and such things were kept. But Garth was not to be seen among them.

"Where is thee?" cried Miss Robinson in agitation, coming back to the south room by way of the dining-room and hall, to make sure.

"Inside somewhere," Garth's voice insisted. "It 's the secret place! Come down to the boat-house, *quick,* Miss Robinson, and help me out."

Miss Robinson did indeed go to the boat-house quickly—so quickly that she arrived there long before Garth, in the dark, retraced his way through the passage. She stood looking in uncomprehending amazement at the uncov-

ered pit in the floor of her boat-house, and nearly tumbled into it herself when Garth's curly head, much besprinkled with dust and cobwebs, suddenly emerged from it.

"It goes right up into the house," he gasped when she had pulled him up to the floor. "Treasure 's in there—really truly Spanish treasure—pearls and rubies and diamonds—and your silver coffee-pot, I think; that is, there *is* a silver coffee-pot, and—"

"Child, what *is* thee talking about?" said Miss Robinson.

She knew that Garth had a lively imagination, but she had never known him to carry his fancies quite so far.

"*Really,*" he said. "That 's why there are tinklings. It 's somewhere near the whispering-post. There are stairs—little ones—only my light went out so that I could n't see where they went. But the treasure 's all over them."

Miss Robinson might possibly agree that a secret staircase existed in her old house—indeed, there were stories to that effect in the family—but that it was strewn with rubies and pearls she could not be expected to believe.

"Thee must have seen something in there that thee *thought* was treasure, Garth," she

protested. "A little thing will shine very brightly when a light catches it. . . . Why, child, thee can hardly walk; what 's the matter?" For Garth had staggered and clutched her suddenly.

"I think I whacked my knee pretty hard," he said, "when I fell down the hole. I forgot about it."

Miss Robinson picked him up in strong, kind arms, and carried him to the house. He was very hot and dusty and tired and somehow confused. He was glad to rest his head on the shoulder of her crisp, snowy, piqué blouse, and see nothing but the curious old agate brooch she wore.

Miss Robinson brushed the cobwebs off him and put him in the hammock. Then she went out of her open door and walked quickly up Washington Street to the Pemberleys' house, the little silver trinkets at her watch-fob jingling hastily as she went.

Elspeth and Celia and John Loomis followed Miss Robinson to her house. Jim, being at the Torpedo Station, was unfortunately out of it. Garth, who had left the hammock, was found balanced on a chair, diligently

thumping the paneled wall of the south room.

"It *does* sound hollow," he announced. "Go around and see if you can hear it on the other side."

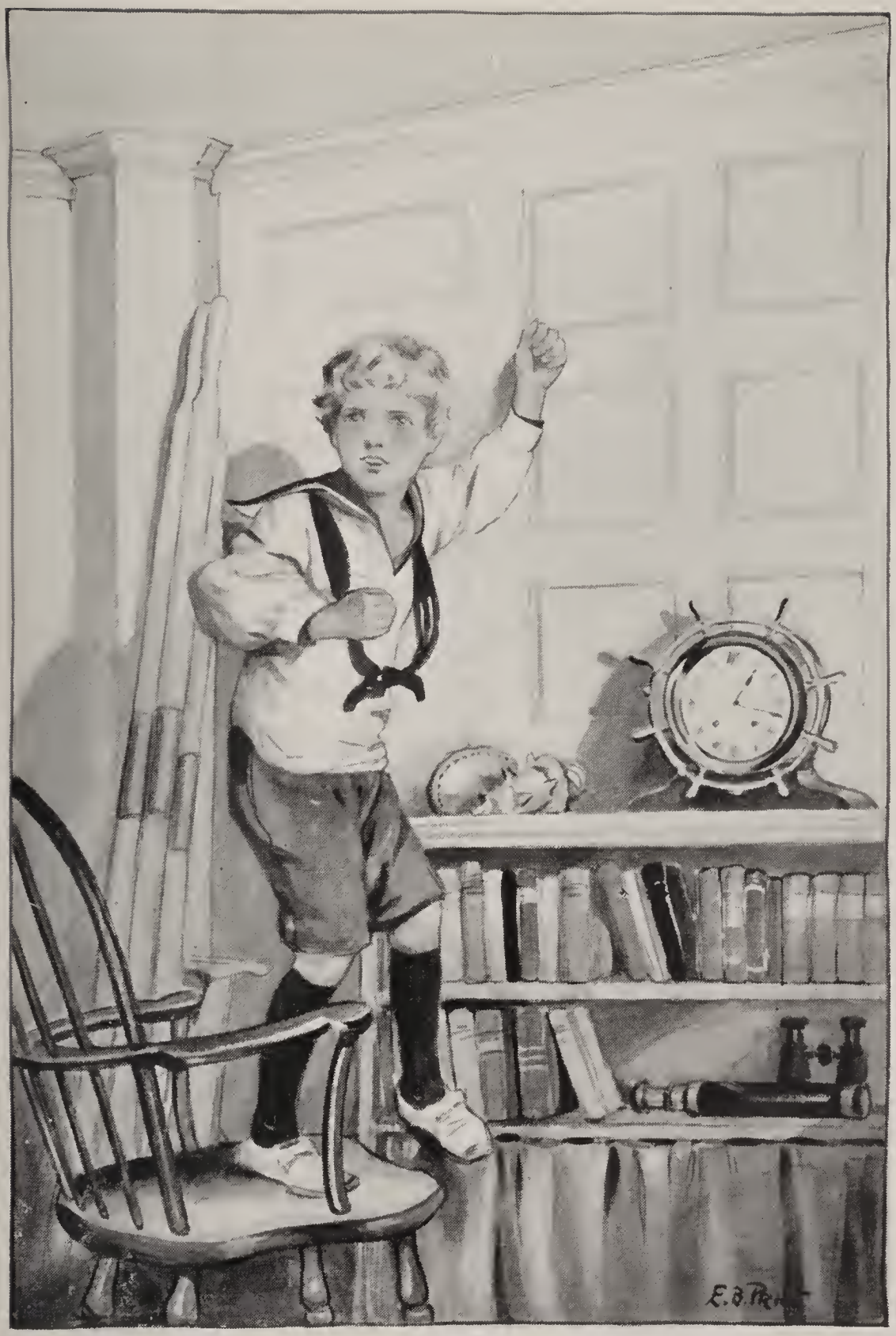
No one could hear it through on the opposite side. It was quite plain that the secret stair ran up between the partitions. Then there was a rush for the boat-house. John Loomis and Garth, armed with a larger and more reliable flash-light, entered the tunnel, while the others went back to listen in the south room. Loomis had to bend double to go through the passage.

"It 's like a Peruvian treasure-house," he murmured.

"Wait till you see the treasure!" Garth said.

Garth had not himself caught more than a glimpse of the treasure before his light went out. Now he and Loomis crouched on the steps staring, amazed. For there were emerald pendants, collars of pearls, diamond ear-drops, costly rings, bracelets twinkling with sapphires, and, above and behind all this, a stately, tarnished, silver coffee-service engraved with the arms of France and the United States.

"Did pirates hide it here? Does it all belong to Miss Robinson?" Garth asked. "I



"It does sound hollow!"

know the coffee-pots do, because Rochambeau gave 'em to her great-great-ancestors."

"Speak a little louder," begged Miss Robinson's voice; "we can't quite hear thee."

Strangest of all strange feelings! To realize that the bright, windy south room lay just beside them, with Elspeth and Celia and Miss Robinson listening at the whispering-post! For the secret stair seemed as remote as the shaft of a mine.

"We 're going on up," Loomis called, "to see where it goes to."

They soon found out, by bumping their heads against a solid flooring. Footsteps trampled close overhead.

"Is it here?" said Miss Robinson.

"Yes!" the voices beneath her answered.

"This is Martha's room," she cried. "It was changed from a little storeroom. The new floor must have been laid over a secret trap-door of some kind."

"Are we to see the treasure," Elspeth shouted, "or is it to continue to exist in your imaginations?"

"We want Fogger to see it just where it is," Garth explained. "He might have an idea."

He did. It was almost dusk when he located his family at Miss Robinson's house and arrived there himself. He listened to the tales of Garth and Loomis about Inca treasure hidden by bold buccaneers in the good old days, and to Miss Robinson's incredulous denials, and to his wife's wondering speculations. Then he said, "H'm," and went into the tunnel alone. After one comprehensive look at his son, who wanted to go with him, he remarked firmly:

"I think *you 've* done just about enough exploring for one day."

When he came out, dusting his clothes with his hands, he merely said, "Ho! 't is as I thought," and went off to the telephone, leaving the others in a growing fever of impatience and wonderment. It grew further when three stalwart policemen presented themselves unobtrusively at Miss Robinson's door.

"To catch the buccaneers," Jim explained. "Let 's sit on the porch now, and watch the entertainment—and find out if I 'm right."

"Oh!" said Loomis suddenly, and, sitting down on the porch rail beside Jim, murmured a question.

"Without a doubt," said Jim.

There were no songs this evening. The harbor was still, reflecting lights in golden spears. For a long time it seemed as though Jim's "entertainment" were not going to be performed. Garth, who was tired, was nearly asleep in the hammock, when Miss Robinson asked suddenly:

"Is that that man again? I really wish he 'd make use of some other landing-place."

"Watch this time and see if he comes out past the boat-house," said Jim in a low voice.

He did not. Everything was very still. There was a faint sound as of a creaking board somewhere. Two tall shadows moved at the foot of the lawn, and something flashed palely.

"I dare say, if we listened," murmured Jim, "we 'd find that the whispering-post was clinking."

"You mean—" said Elspeth suddenly.

"Hush!" said Jim.

What seemed a very long time went by. The water slapped at the sea-wall; the *putt-putt* of a motor-boat drifted in spasmodically. Then there was, all at once, a crash in the boat-house, an oath, an inarticulate growling, the report of a revolver like a flash above it all. Jim and Loomis were no longer on the piazza.

A cheery voice came up from the water-front:

"You 're sure some little detective, Looten-ant!"

"It was perfectly obvious," Jim explained a little later. "Of course your theories about pirate treasure were wild. The minute I saw the stuff I perceived that most of it was modern—platinum settings and all that sort of business—therefore probably recently stolen. Coupled with our mysterious water-front friend, it was as plain as a pikestaff. How *he* knew about the passage remains to be seen. The chief will have that out of him."

And what about the Rochambeau coffee-service? There it stood in the middle of the table, blackened but beautiful, gleaming dully in the lamplight. Whether it had been stolen by some long-ago servant who had hidden it and been prevented from taking it away, was a matter of conjecture; but there it was, majestic and magnificent, for everybody to wonder at.

"Well," said Jim to his son, whom he insisted upon carrying home, "it strikes me you literally fell into a fortune, old man."

Jim was able to enlighten his family further next day when he returned from the police station.

"Our pirate found the passage," he told them, "when he was sleeping in the boat-house early this spring—being out of work. He followed it up and found the coffee-service, which stirred an evil idea in his mind. Of course no one was living in the house just then. Ha! There you are! Mysterious disappearance of priceless gems from fashionable residents of Newport! Many villas robbed! But the thief doesn't leave town. Stone Bridge watched. All exits from island watched. Baffled police about to give up search. Meanwhile thief stores gems in secret stairway, planning to make getaway by motor-boat when all suspicion had died. (By the way, our friend was going to skip last night with the whole business; he heard us talking just as much as we heard him tinkling, and it began to alarm him.) So there it is! Intrepid youth falls down entrance to secret passage, discovering the loot and enabling gallant naval officer to make deductions worthy of a Sherlock Holmes. Our pirate is in irons, and to Garth belongs the glory—for

not watching his step when putting away shellac!''

Miss Robinson could not help thinking that it was one of the most extraordinary adventures that had ever befallen the old house. She polished the Rochambeau coffee-service until it shone; and from its rightful place in the shell-cabinet it gleamed gently, guarding more than it could tell of a century's oblivion in the secret staircase.

CHAPTER XX

GARTH PEMBERLEY, A.B.

THE navy played a large part in Newport's affairs. A vast number of extra men were still quartered at the Training Station, and sailors swarmed in the streets every liberty day. Destroyers had been in and out, and Garth, during their brief appearances, had lived with a telescope at his eye in a desperate effort to decipher their constant wig-wagging.

One glorious afternoon of blue above and below, the *Ailouros* lay off and on beneath the Training Station slopes, while her occupants watched manœuvers ashore. Thousands of apprentice seamen marched and countermarched on the smooth sweep of green below the commanding façade of the War College, white uniforms gleaming, bayonets winking. The band at the foot of the hill crashed out swinging music; at the head of the slope the admiral and his staff reviewed the drill.

When, at the end, "Nancy Lee" echoed tremendously from a thousand throats as the men marched singing from the parade-ground, Garth nearly went overboard with enthusiasm. The *Ailouros* tacked all the way home to the tune of "Yeo ho, we go across the sea!"

"The destroyers are coming in to-morrow," Jim declared that night. "The whole outfit. My old *026* will be in, Pem. We 'll have to try to get out to her."

"How many? Oh, hurray!" said Garth.

"The whole flotilla. There 'll be a lot of *bing-banging,* I suppose, when they arrive. Our old friend the *Billington* is the mothership, as usual. You 'll be able to welcome *her* like a long-lost cousin."

The *Billington,* with her brood of destroyers, had hovered at times about Pettasantuck Bay in the Silver Shoal days.

"You might sail out to meet 'em," Jim suggested further. "It 's rather a fine sight."

"We could, could n't we!" Garth cried. "What a lark!"

"You can be a sort of welcome committee sent out to extend them the freedom of the bay, as 't were," Jim said.

The destroyers could not have found a more perfect day for their arrival. The harbor was scintillating cobalt with a fine fresh wind blowing roundly, and billowing clouds of purple and pearl marching above.

Celia was eager for the sail because Loomis was—but partly lured, too, by the dancing water and the summoning wind. She still was inclined to wear suède pumps sailing, but she disposed herself in a boat now in a much less lubberly fashion than at first. Garth was, on the whole, encouraged by her progress. She no longer spoke of the "back" and "front" of a boat, and usually remembered to refer to the *Ailouros* as "she." Celia was not much encouraged, however, by Loomis's progress. Indeed he had made none, so far as remembering himself went. Apart from that momentary flicker of searching wonder when he had sung "The Sally Gardens," he had given no sign of recognition of her or of past happenings. He seemed to prefer Garth's company to that of any one else, and was always steadier and happier and less "bothered" with him. Perhaps this was because Garth never expected him to be anybody but John Loomis, while

every one else, unconsciously, could n't help thinking all the time that he ought to be Wyeth Merriman.

By the time the *Ailouros* reached the outer harbor, the smoke of the destroyers was to be seen blurring the seaward horizon. They were coming in file, the *Billington* steaming ahead. The *Ailouros* flitted down to meet her, and stood off and on, making short tacks, while the cleaving, curving bow of the cruiser cut nearer and nearer.

"*Don't* go so close," Celia begged. "Suppose it ran into us!"

"By the time she gets here, the *Ailouros* won't be," Loomis laughed.

Garth was standing in front of the mast, holding to a stay. He flourished his hand to the oncoming ship, and various white hats were wagged in return. At the instant when Loomis was preparing to go about and run down away from the cruiser, the *Billington* loosed the thunder of her guns and fired the first volley of her salute—square across the *Ailouros*. It was a terrific, shattering detonation, that tore the silence to shreds.

And Loomis, his face gone suddenly white and blank, beat strangely at the air and lurched

sideways against the tiller, inert. The *Ailouros,* thus abandoned, behaved wildly. The sheet rattled out, the boom swung wide; then, as the wind caught the sail aback, she jibed violently. At that, the limp figure of Loomis rolled to the bottom of the cockpit, and Celia went upon her knees beside him, whiter than he.

It had all happened with the quickness of a thunderclap. The force of the jibe had nearly flung Garth from his perch in front of the mast. With an eye on the uncertain movements of the boom—the *Ailouros* was yawing crazily—he wriggled over the hatch and reached the tiller in two leaps. Loomis lay as if dead in the bottom of the boat; Celia crouched beside him. But even if she had not been utterly engrossed with him she would have been of no use, for she did n't know the sheet from the mooring-cable. Left alone, the *Ailouros* could not possibly have escaped destruction. The *Billington* was too close upon her for even the order of "Full speed astern" to check the great momentum of the swift cruiser in time.

Hardly knowing what he did, yet aware that it was the only thing to do, Garth flung over

the helm, hooked his knee around the tiller, hauled on the sheet with more strength than was his—and jibed the *Ailouros* again. A little water flashed in over the side, the boat righted herself with a shudder, swept round, and tore off with a rush of bubbles. The great gray flank of the *Billington* loomed by right above; her bow-wash made the *Ailouros* bob and pitch. She was slowing down; the force of her way was only now diminishing, when her keen bow had already passed over the spot where the cat-boat had been.

A spontaneous and roaring cheer broke from the side of the *Billington* suddenly. An officer shouted:

"Well done! Do you want help?"

"No, thanks! All right now!" Garth shouted in return, astonished to find that something funny was the matter with his voice.

The *Ailouros* was drawing away; the cruiser picked up speed. Behind her the destroyers steamed grimly, low, angular, gray shapes. Garth took a turn over a cleat with the sheet, and, for the first time, looked at Loomis. He was muttering in a fixed monotone:

"Now we 've got 'em—got 'em—one more—*one* more—over the top and we 've—got 'em—"

Presently, after a time of silence, he opened his eyes and said:

"I 'm glad you 're here, Celia. I wanted to have you come. . . ."

"I 'm here—Wyeth," Celia said, low and steadily. She had scarcely been aware of the great peril they had all been in.

"I wanted to see you—so much. I 'm afraid —I 'm finished."

"You 're not finished," she said; "oh, you 're just beginning! Look up, dear—look—do you see where you are?"

"Sky," he murmured, "good sky. What 's that? It—this is n't mud, is it—nor—" His hand searched vaguely the wet flooring of the cockpit.

"It 's the *Ailouros*," said Garth.

"Hullo," he said weakly, "that 's—that 's Garth? Oh, I can't—something hurts—"

"Don't try," Celia breathed. "Just rest now. You 're trying to be two people at once, dear. Don't try to understand, now."

Jim, who had come home for lunch, stood on his piazza fingering a marine-glass.

"Time they were in," he said aloud. "Hullo, there she is now!" as the peak of the *Ail-*

ouros' sail gleamed behind the breakwater. When she slipped out past the lighthouse, he leveled the glass. After a moment of fixed gazing, he called suddenly to his wife:

"Elspeth! Pem 's sailing her—and I can't see a sign of Loomis. Just Celia's head sticking up over the coaming."

"What!" Elspeth was beside him in a flash, reaching for the glass.

"Can't imagine what could have happened," Jim murmured. "Loomis is n't the one to fall overboard; if by any remote chance the boom had caught him the others would certainly have hauled him aboard. Would they have landed him for any reason, Elspeth?"

"I can't think of anything," she said. "He might be ill, and lying in the bottom of the boat. Perhaps he 's just lying there anyway—for fun, resting."

"Bah," said Jim, "you don't lie in the cockpit for fun; he 'd be on the hatch, if that were it. And why should he be ill? He 's no reason to be. By Jove, our son is sailing to suit the queen's taste! The glass, Elspeth; he 's going to come about."

The *Ailouros* ran up into the wind, the boom swung over, and she went about and was off

on the other tack with hardly a second's loss of way.

"Deuced neat!" ejaculated Jim. "Elspeth, I 'd no idea he was so really competent. Got his knee against the tiller and hauling away on the sheet for dear life. Here, take a look!"

"He ought n't to be doing that," Garth's mother murmured, gazing through the glass; "that 's heavy work, Jim."

"I 'll go out and help him at the buoy," Jim said. "No, I can't, either; the *Cymba 's* out there, of course."

"Run to Miss Robinson's," Elspeth suggested, quickly; "she 'll let you take one of her boats."

Jim was off before she had finished speaking. Miss Robinson very soon appeared on the Pemberleys' piazza, and together she and Elspeth walked down to the end of the pier to watch the incoming boat. Jim was half-way between Miss Robinson's wharf and the buoy, rowing with long strokes.

Garth missed the buoy at his first try, and reached off for another run to it. He had apparently roused Celia to help, for she stood precariously in the bow, clinging to a stay and

looking intent but not very useful. She crouched down and made a snatch for the buoy after the *Ailouros's* bow had shot beyond it; but by that time Jim was there. He caught the nose of the cat-boat, made her fast, and climbed aboard. The watchers on the pier saw him bend down to look at something in the cockpit. He stood talking to Celia. Then the sail came down.

"Do you suppose Mr. Loomis is lying there," Miss Robinson wondered, "and that 's what your husband was looking at?"

"Oh, look!" cried Elspeth.

For Jim and Celia were helping Loomis himself into the skiff. He was very pale and seemed to be somewhat uncertain on his feet, but he was smiling—a queer, dazed smile. Once in the rowboat, Celia sat beside him in the stern and took his head upon her shoulder.

"Can—can *it* have happened?" Elspeth hazarded.

"I wonder if that could possibly be," Miss Robinson murmured.

Jim had lifted his son into the *Cymba*. Towing the other rowboat astern, he pulled for the pier.

"Is John hurt?" Elspeth cried.

But no one in the skiff said anything. It was not until they were on the pier that Celia spoke. She stood looking up at Loomis, half supporting him. He still smiled his strange, wondering smile, and now and then covered his eyes for a moment with his hand. Celia conquered her quivering voice.

"Elspeth," she cried with a tremulous bravado, "this—this is my fiancé—Wyeth Merriman!"

"But he 's John Loomis, too," Garth said hastily, "*are n't* you?"

Merriman spoke very slowly. "Yes—I 'm —I suppose I am. It 's so curious. So very curious. To remember it all, and to—to have had Celia all the time, and remember that, and yet not to have known. I—I think perhaps I 'd better lie down."

"I think you had," Elspeth said. "When you wake up you 'll know just who you are."

They all moved slowly up the pier.

"But how did it *happen?*" That was what Jim and Elspeth wanted to know, after Merriman was tucked up in the dim coolness of his room.

"The cannon," said Celia; "we were so close

—it crashed out just over us. He simply crumpled up. When he could speak at all, he seemed to think he was in the trenches. His mind seemed to begin working again just where it stopped when he was shell-shocked in France."

"Yet he remembers being John Loomis?" Elspeth asked.

"After a little while, yes. He can't quite understand, yet, but it keeps growing clearer."

Jim had been pondering. Now he asked suddenly:

"Was he steering when it happened?"

"Yes," Celia said. "He just fell away from the rudder."

"The tiller," murmured Garth, ever vigilant. He had let "cannon" pass.

"What happened then?" Jim pursued.

"I really don't know, I 'm afraid," Celia confessed. "The battle-ship was very near—coming straight toward us. I had told Wyeth I thought we were too close, before it all happened."

"Where were you, Pem?" Jim asked, lazily drawing at his pipe.

"In front of the mast," said Garth.

"Hmph! Handy place!" his father remarked. "What did the boat do when Loomis —Merriman—whoever he is—went to pieces?"

"She jibed like fits," Garth declared. "I nearly went overboard. The *Billington* was just going to run us down, so I went aft and jibed again and got out of the way."

"You went aft and jibed again," Jim repeated. "How near was the *Billington?*"

Garth looked about him for a measure.

"About as far as from here to the sea-wall," he said.

"My child!" protested Miss Robinson.

"You must have gone aft rather rapidly," Jim commented. "What made you think that jibing her was the thing to do?"

"It was the *only* thing to do," Garth said. "The men on the *Billington* cheered us. It was 'citing."

"It must have been," said Jim dryly.

"I never even heard them," said Celia.

Elspeth sat silent. She exchanged one long, deep look with her husband.

"I must say, Garth," said Miss Esther Robinson, rising to go, "thee 's surely shown thyself to be a remarkably good sailor."

That evening Wyeth Merriman sat up in a wicker chair and pieced things out. He had been alone with Celia for an hour, and his patchwork of memories seemed to be nearly put together. Physically, he was weak with shock. Mentally, he was rebuilding everything eagerly and strongly. He looked about him suddenly with a great wonder.

"You blessed people!" he cried. "What ever made you so gentle and so loyal to John Loomis? (Good heavens, Pemberley, I believe I still have half your things!) Why, what an ass you must all have been thinking me. I—"

"Not one bit," Elspeth said. "John Loomis was such a dear dreamer. Don't let him go away altogether!"

Celia smiled. "I knew Wyeth Merriman before," she said. "I promise you that all you loved in John Loomis will be left."

"He didn't have much wit, though," said Merriman, "or he 'd have fallen in love with Celia Hampton all over again!"

They all laughed then. Jim had been rather quiet since he had returned from the station that afternoon. He rose now and looked across at his son.

"Let 's go out and take a look at the ships before you turn in," he suggested.

Garth followed his father out into the cool, soft darkness, and stood beside him at the porch rail. Jim seemed very tall indeed in his white summer uniform—a looming pale figure. His cigarette glowed and waned in the dark. Out in the black harbor the flashing signal-lights of the destroyers winked their messages back and forth, till it seemed as though the night were full of giant fireflies.

"Been talking to the skipper of the *Billington,*" Jim said abruptly. "Saw him at the station this afternoon. He says that was a near thing this morning."

"I guess it was," Garth agreed. "She was coming rather fast."

"She was coming *very* fast," his father said; "so fast that she could n't have slowed or changed course in time. He says you did a very pretty piece of seamanship."

"Fogger," said Garth uneasily.

"Well?" Jim prompted.

"I was simply frightened to death," Garth confessed.

"Of course you were," his father said. "The point is, that you did the only thing that could

save the boat at the only moment it could be done to save her. Wherefore you proved yourself competent to meet an emergency and meet it well;—that 's all."

"The *Ailouros* was frightened, too," Garth said. "She yawed all over the place. It was awful, Fogger. I never thought of it before, somehow—the way she needs us all the time."

"The best boat is helpless without a hand at the helm," Jim said. "I dare say she was pretty glad to feel that tiller go over."

"She 's an old wompus," Garth declared; "I thought I 'd break myself, hauling that sheet."

"Um," said Jim. "Never talk to me again about your being 'unseaworthy,' or whatever it is you think you are."

The familiar, friendly water sounds murmured through the darkness. The awning stirred perpetually with a muffled flapping in the night wind from the sea. Jim put his hands suddenly upon his son's shoulders. He was silent for a moment, and then in a queer, quick, low voice he said:

"Garth Pemberley—A.B."